

With a new preface by the authors

NOAM CHOMSKY
EDWARD S. HERMAN

THE WASHINGTON CONNECTION AND THIRD WORLD FASCISM

The Political Economy of Human Rights—Volume I



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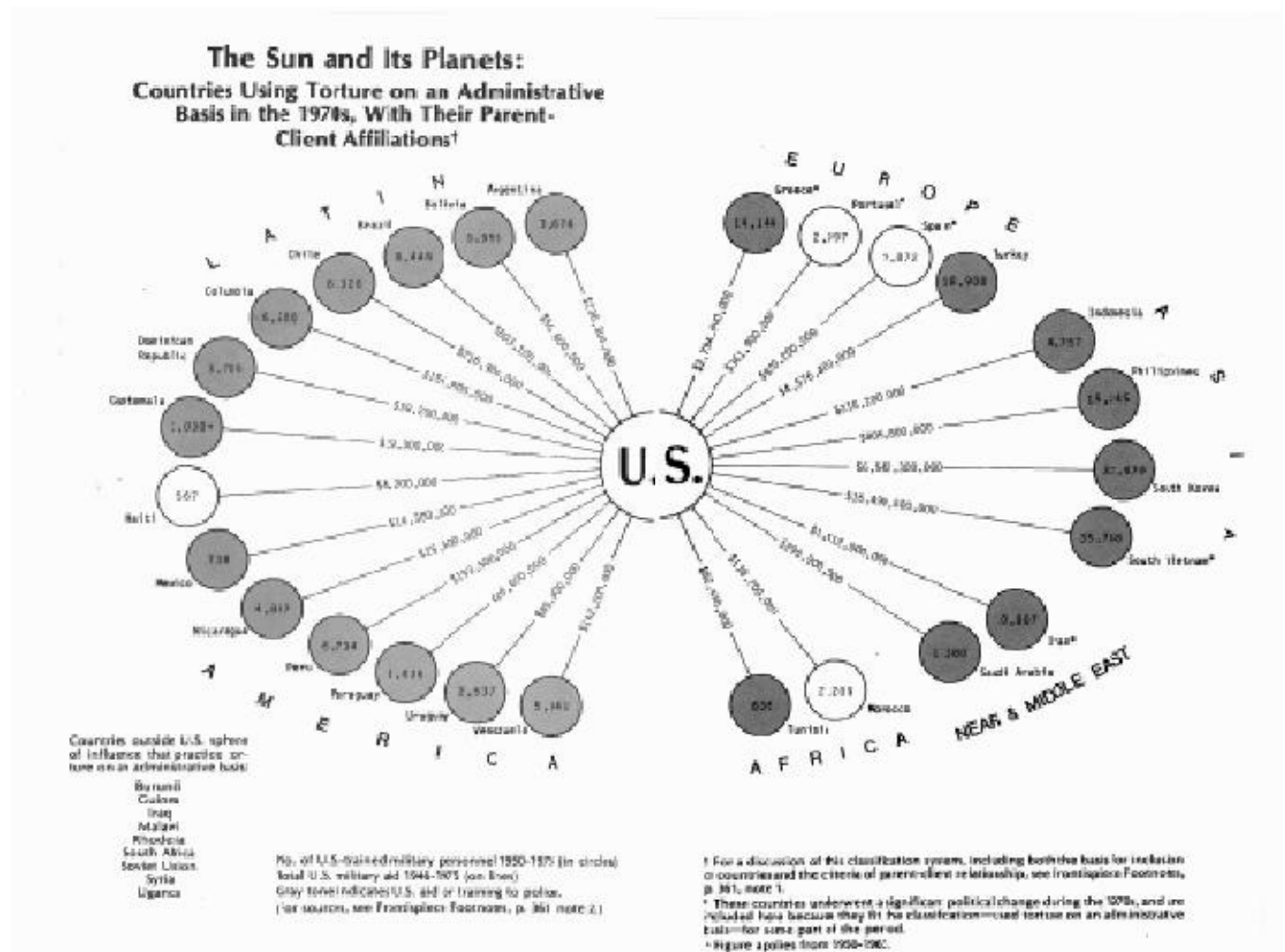
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The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism

The Political Economy of Human Rights
Volume I

Noam Chomsky
and Edward S. Herman

The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism



† For a discussion of this classification system, including both the basis for inclusion of countries and the criteria of parent-client relationship, see Frontispiece Footnotes, p. 411, note 1.

* These countries underwent a significant political change in the 1970s, and are included here because they fit the classification—used torture on an administrative basis—for some part of the period.

+ Figure applies from 1950–1963.

No. of U.S.-trained military personnel 1950–1975 (in circles)

Total U.S. military aid 1946–1975 (on lines)

Gray tone indicates U.S. aid of training to police

[\(For sources, see Frontispiece Footnotes, p. 412, note 2.\)](#)

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The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.

—George Orwell, “Notes on Nationalism,” 1945

Preface to the 2014 Edition

Our study *The Political Economy of Human Rights* originally published 25 years ago, consists of two volumes, closely interrelated. The first, entitled *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, reviews the horrendous reign of terror, torture, violence and slaughter that Washington unleashed against much of the world in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily in the western hemisphere and Southeast Asia, including U.S. aggression in Indochina, surely the worst crime of the post-World War II era. The second volume, *After the Cataclysm*, reviews the immediate aftermath in Indochina along with some relevant but overlooked comparative and historical material.

As discussed in the preface to the original publication, the two volumes are devoted to both facts and beliefs: the facts insofar as they could be obtained, and beliefs arising from the way facts were selected and interpreted through the distorting prism of a very powerful ideological system, which gains much of its power from the belief that it is free and independent.

The earlier history of *PEHR*, reviewed in a prefatory note to the first volume, illustrates some of the interesting features of the doctrinal system. In brief, an earlier version was published by a small but successful publisher, owned by a major conglomerate. An executive of the conglomerate was offended by its contents, and in order to prevent its appearance shut down the publisher, effectively destroying all its stock. With very rare exceptions, civil libertarians in the U.S. saw no problem in these actions, presumably because control of expression by concentrated private power, as distinct from the state, is considered not only legitimate but even an exercise of “freedom,” in a perverse sense of “freedom” that finds a natural place in the prevailing radically anti-libertarian ideology (often called “liberal” or even “libertarian,” a matter that will not surprise readers of Orwell).

Elsewhere, we have discussed the general character of the doctrinal system more explicitly, reviewing its consequences in a wide array of domains.¹

One useful perspective on the ideological system is provided by a comparison of treatment by media and commentary of *their* crimes and *our own*—both the reporting of the facts and the propaganda system’s reaction to each. There was a highly revealing illustration at the time we were writing in 1977-78: the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in December 1975, and the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia in April 1975. Our two longest and most detailed chapters review these two cases: East Timor in volume I,

Cambodia in volume II.

In both cases, information was quite limited. In the case of East Timor, knowledge of the facts was limited by design: a good deal was quite accessible, including coverage in the Australian press. In the case of Cambodia, in contrast, reliable facts were very hard to obtain.

There was, however, extensive information about the second element of our inquiry: the belief systems that were constructed. In the case of East Timor, the U.S. reaction was brief: silence or denial. In the case of Cambodia, as we reviewed in detail, the reaction was unrestrained horror at the acts of unspeakable brutality, demonstrating the ultimate evil of the global enemy and its Marxist-Leninist doctrines.

The comparison is revealing. In both cases, it was clear that terrible crimes were in process, in the same area of the world, in the same years. There was one striking difference between the two cases. The crimes underway in Cambodia could be attributed to an official enemy (at least if U.S. actions, directly death-dealing and also helping lay the basis for further deaths are overlooked, as they were) and no one had a suggestion as to what might be done to mitigate or end them. In the case of East Timor, the crimes unequivocally traced back to Washington, which gave the “green light” for the invasion and provided critical military and diplomatic support for the vast atrocities (with the help of its allies), and they could have been ended very easily, simply by orders from Washington. That conclusion, never seriously in doubt, was demonstrated in September 1999, when President Clinton, under intense domestic and international pressure, quietly informed the Indonesian generals that the game was over. They instantly abandoned their strenuous claims to the territory and withdrew, allowing a UN peace-keeping force to enter. In a display of cynicism that mere words cannot capture, this was interpreted as a “humanitarian intervention,” a sign of the nobility of the West.²

Our chapter on East Timor was far and away the most important in the two volumes, precisely because the huge ongoing crimes could have so readily been ended. It passed without mention in the doctrinal system—as, indeed, did our detailed review of many other U.S. crimes. In dramatic contrast, a sizable literature has been devoted to our chapter on Cambodia, desperately seeking to discover some error, and with unsupported and unjustifiable claims about our alleged apologetics for Pol Pot. We reviewed those that were even mildly serious in *Manufacturing Consent*, and there should be no need to do so again.

While evidence about Cambodia in 1978 was slim, enough existed to make it clear, as

we wrote, that “the record of atrocities in Cambodia is substantial and often gruesome,” with “a fearful toll,” though the available facts bore little relation to the huge chorus of denunciation of the genocidal Marxist rulers. Not all joined in the chorus, including some of the most knowledgeable and respected correspondents, among them Nayan Chanda of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The most striking exceptions were the few people who actually had some significant information about what was happening: the State Department Cambodia specialists, who stressed the limited nature of evidence available at the time we wrote and estimated that deaths from all causes were probably in the “tens if not hundreds of thousands,” largely from disease, malnutrition, and “brutal, rapid change,” not “mass genocide.”

Such sources, however, were not useful for the task of ideological reconstruction, so they were ignored. And the tasks were serious ones. One crucial task was to suppress the hideous crimes that the U.S. had committed in Indochina, and even justify them by invoking the catastrophe when the U.S. finally withdrew. That includes Cambodia, where the U.S. air force executed Henry Kissinger’s orders (originating with Nixon) for “A massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. Anything that flies on anything that moves” in rural Cambodia. A related task was to turn the anti-war movement into the guilty parties by charging them with denying enemy crimes and even for preventing (non-existent) Western efforts to overcome them. Amazingly, Western intellectuals even rose to these demands.³

When some information about East Timor finally seeped through the ideological filters, it became necessary to explain why the U.S. government had been so fully engaged in these terrible crimes—which went on through 1999—and why the Free Press had failed to bring them to public attention while focusing attention on crimes of the official enemy that were beyond our control. The obvious explanation, confirmed in innumerable other cases, could not be accepted. A “more structurally serious explanation” was offered by the respected correspondent William Shawcross: “a comparative lack of sources” and lack of access to refugees. In short, the extensive information in the Australian media was unavailable to Western journalists in comparison to the very scattered data about Cambodia; and it is far more difficult to travel to Lisbon or Melbourne to interview the thousands of refugees there than to trek through the jungle on the Thai-Cambodia border.

Most chose a different approach. James Fallows explained that the U.S. “averted its eyes from East Timor” and “could have done far more than it did to distance itself from the carnage”—the carnage that it was purposefully implementing. Later, in her famous

study of our failure to respond properly to the crimes of others, current UN Ambassador Samantha Power wrote that “the United States looked away” when Indonesia invaded East Timor, killing perhaps one-fourth of its population. In fact, the U.S. looked right there from the first moment, and continued to for 25 years until finally deciding to end the criminal aggression by its favored client.⁴

The basic facts were never obscure, at least to those interested in their own responsibility for what happens in the world. When Indonesia invaded, the UN sought to react but was blocked by the United States. The reasons were explained by UN Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan, widely lauded as a dedicated advocate of international law and morality. In his 1978 memoirs, he wrote with pride about his achievements after the Indonesian invasion and its grim aftermath, of which, he makes clear, he was well aware. In his words: “The United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.”⁵

Khmer Rouge atrocities peaked in 1978, and were ended when Vietnam invaded and drove the Khmer Rouge out of the country. The U.S. immediately turned to supporting the Khmer Rouge under the name “Democratic Kampuchea,” while continuing its support of Indonesia’s ongoing crimes in East Timor. The reasons were candidly explained by the State Department: the “continuity” of Democratic Kampuchea with the Pol Pot regime “unquestionably” made it “more representative of the Cambodian people than the [Timorese resistance] Fretilin is of the Timorese people.”⁶

The doctrinal system remained unaffected.

The pattern is pervasive. To move to another area, consider Latin America, the traditional U.S. “backyard.” In Volume I, we reviewed some of the horrifying consequences of U.S. policies there from the early 1960s. The plague of repression that spread over the continent hit Central America with full force after we wrote, always with crucial U.S. participation and initiative. The general picture is well known to scholarship. John Coatsworth observes that from 1960 to “the Soviet collapse in 1990, the numbers of political prisoners, torture victims, and executions of non-violent political dissenters in Latin America vastly exceeded those in the Soviet Union and its East European satellites,”⁷ including many religious martyrs, and mass slaughter as well, consistently supported or initiated in Washington. Needless to say, the conventional picture within the ideological system is reversed.

Another and related reversal is even more dramatic. In recent years, much of Latin America has broken free from U.S. domination, a development of enormous historical significance, illustrated in many ways. One has to do with the topic of our study. During the period we reviewed, Latin America was a primary center of torture worldwide. No longer. The extent to which that has changed is revealed in an important study by the Open Society Foundation that reviewed global participation in the CIA program of extraordinary rendition. This program, initiated by George W. Bush, sends suspects to favored dictators so that they can be tortured and might provide some testimony—true or false, it doesn't much matter—that can be used to expedite U.S. terror operations.⁸ Virtually the entire world participated: the Middle East, of course, because that was where the selected torturers were, and most of Europe. In fact only one region was absent from the record of shame: Latin America.⁹

The implications are evident, and have reached the doctrinal system in much the same fashion as those reviewed at length in these two volumes.

Preface

This study, consisting of two related volumes, deals with relations between the United States and the Third World. It has a dual focus: on facts and on beliefs. The basic *fact* is that the United States has organized under its sponsorship and protection a neocolonial system of client states ruled mainly by terror and serving the interests of a small local and foreign business and military elite. The fundamental *belief*, or ideological pretense, is that the United States is dedicated to furthering the cause of democracy and human rights throughout the world, though it may occasionally err in the pursuit of this objective.

Since 1960 over 18 Latin American regimes have been subjected to military takeovers—a “domino effect” neglected in the West. U.S. influence has been crucial in this process, in some cases by means of deliberate subversion or even direct aggression, but invariably important given the substantial economic and military penetration and presence of the superpower. The phenomenon itself is neither new nor confined to Latin America. The fate of Guatemalan democracy, subverted by the CIA in 1954 in favor of a regime of torture and oppression, can be matched with that of Iran a year earlier; and the Philippines, brutally subjugated at the turn of the century, has now been stripped of its short-lived democratic facade without a word of protest by the United States. This, and the subsequent sharp increases in economic and military aid to the martial law government of Marcos, not only reflect a familiar and traditional pattern, they are also compelling evidence of approval and support.

The ugly proclivities of the U.S. clients, including the systematic use of torture, are functionally related to the needs of U.S. (and other) business interests, helping to stifle unions and contain reformist threats that might interfere with business freedom of action. The proof of the pudding is that U.S. bankers and industrialists have consistently welcomed the “stability” of the new client fascist order, whose governments, while savage in their treatment of dissidents, priests, labor leaders, peasant organizers or others who threaten “order,” and at best indifferent to the mass of the population, have been most accommodating to large external interests. In an important sense, therefore, the torturers in the client states are functionaries of IBM, Citibank, Allis Chalmers and the U.S. government, playing their assigned roles in a system that has worked according to choice and plan.

With the spread and huge dimensions of the empire of Third World fascism, complete with death squads, torture and repression, the gap between fact and belief has become a

yawning chasm. The ideological institutions—the press, schools and universities—thus face a growing challenge. It is, one might have thought, a formidable task to transmute increasing numbers of fascist thugs into respectable “leaders” worthy of our subsidies and active support. Equally serious is the problem of depicting the United States itself as fit to judge and assess the human rights record of other states, in this context of sponsorship of an international mafia, and immediately after its prolonged and brutal assault on the peasant societies of Indochina. Nevertheless, these formidable tasks have been accomplished without notable difficulty, and the credibility gap has been successfully bridged by a very effective system of rewriting recent history and selecting, processing and creating current “information”. As we describe in detail throughout this work, on fundamental issues the mass media in the United States—what we will refer to as the “Free Press”—function very much in the manner of a system of state-controlled propaganda, and their achievements are, in fact, quite awesome.

The first volume is devoted to analyzing the forces that have shaped the U.S.-sponsored neo-colonial world, the nature of the client states, and the processes and rationales that the ideological institutions have employed to defend and justify the proliferating terror. The coverage is far from exhaustive; we have selected only a few instances to explore in varying degrees of detail. Our primary concern is the United States: its global policies, their institutional basis in the domestic society and its mechanisms of propaganda. We do not discuss at all the important matter of relations among the powers within the First World of industrial capitalism, or relations between these powers and the Soviet Bloc or China. We also will not consider the background and nature of the movements called “socialist” or “Communist” in the Third World. Nor do we discuss the Soviet empire and the characteristics and effects of that lesser system of Sun and Planets.

Volume II, entitled *After the Cataclysm*, is devoted to “postwar Indochina and the reconstruction of imperial ideology” (the subtitle). It deals with the postwar condition of Indochina, the sources of its problems, Western responses to the travail of its populations emerging from the wreckage. In addition to considering each of the three Indochinese states, we look at the question of refugees and postwar retribution in historical context and give considerable attention to the Western media’s use and misuse of the Indochinese experience to rehabilitate the bruised doctrinal system of the imperial powers.

The picture that emerges from this inquiry seems to us a very grim one, both at the level of fact and with regard to the capacity of Western ideological institutions to falsify, obscure and reinterpret the facts in the interest of those who dominate the economy and

political system. But this system is not all-powerful, as millions of people learned from their own experience during the U.S. war in Indochina. Until 1965, it was virtually impossible to gain a hearing for any principled opposition to the U.S. military intervention in Indochina, already well-advanced by that time. By “principled opposition” we mean opposition based not on an estimate of national costs and benefits but on the view that the United States has no unique right to exercise force and violence to gain its objectives. Later, a hearing of sorts did become possible, partly through organizations and publications associated with the peace movement itself, and partly as a result of the news value of peace activism as it assumed mass proportions. The Free Press remained largely closed to direct access by the movement throughout the war. The peace movement also had to overcome the obstacle of active state hostility to its efforts. It is now well known that the U.S. government deployed its national political police in a major effort to undermine and destroy the mass movements of the 1960s. Nevertheless, they continued to grow and undoubtedly had an impact on the decisions ultimately taken at the center, without, however, modifying the structure of domestic power in any meaningful way.

This experience shows that even the effective system of ideological controls of the United States has its limitations. It is not impossible for substantial groups to gain some real understanding of social and political reality and to organize and act to modify state policy. The large interests of the country dominate foreign policy, which cannot be altered in its essentials without a change in the internal structure of power or the environment. But while far-reaching internal changes are not likely in the short-run, organized opposition at home can sometimes make enough of a difference to allow struggling peoples a little breathing space. U.S. failures in Indochina and the 1978 upheavals in Iran are two examples out of many showing the very real possibilities of loss of control in the outer reaches of the empire.

While the U.S. and its allies have armed the neo-fascist elites of the Third World to the teeth, and saturated them with counterinsurgency weaponry and training, long-term elite control of the underlying populations is by no means assured. The abuse of Third World majorities in the empire is so flagrant, and their leaderships are so corrupt, inept and visionless, that explosions and loss of control are highly likely in many states over the next several decades. The voiceless majorities can be helped by outsiders in many ways: among them, maximum world-wide exposure of the actual impact of the West on these peoples; strenuous efforts to stem the huge flow of aid and support to official terrorists; and helping to create an ideological and political environment that will make open intervention difficult when explosions do occur.

It is possible that developments in the United States and other industrialized states might alter the present pattern of sponsorship and support for Third World tyrannies. The arms race and the struggle to control Third World countries are contrary to the interests of the majorities of the *developed* countries, and while the system of indoctrination makes it difficult for them to break out of the machine's ideological control, the growing irrationalities and problems of the West, including the extravagant use of energy, the difficulty of controlling externalities, inflation, inadequate work opportunities for increasing numbers, and the enormous waste on arms may create pressures that will increase awareness or cause systemic shocks that may bring real issues to the fore. It is most probable, unfortunately, that a real crisis would result in a shift toward rightist totalitarianism, a "Brazilianization" of the home country. But prediction in this dynamic era has not been notable for its successes. Educational efforts on the true workings of the machine, and organizational actions that build toward altering its basic mechanisms, may yet yield their benefits, even without the major structural changes required to establish democratic control over the basic social and economic institutions, a prerequisite to a truly democratic politics.

The post-Vietnam War collapse of the movement has relieved U.S. imperial authorities of much of the earlier constraining pressure, and they have been able to continue the enlargement and protection of the neo-fascist empire without significant internal impediment. This can only be changed by a renewal of active involvement of large numbers. It is hoped that this book will show that serious concern is urgently demanded by the facts of the situation.

This book is a major revision of a small monograph written in 1972-73 and then suppressed by the corporation that owned the publisher, as described in the Prefatory Note that follows. Many friends and associates have read parts of earlier drafts of the manuscript and have provided information and critical comment that have helped us immeasurably. We will refer to some of them, quite inadequately, in separate sections that follow. Special mention should be made of Josh Markel for his research assistance and Bonnie Wilker for both research and general help in preparation of the manuscript. Finally we would like to express our thanks to the South End Press collective for their assistance throughout, and in particular, for their care, efficiency, and dedication in producing these books under unusually difficult conditions.

A Prefatory Note by the Authors on the History of the Suppression of the First Edition of This Book

An earlier version of this volume was originally contracted for and produced as a monograph by Warner Modular Publications, Inc., a subsidiary member of the Warner communications and entertainment conglomerate. The publishing house had run a relatively independent operation up to the time of the controversy over this document. The editors and publisher were enthusiastic about the monograph and committed themselves to put it out quickly and to promote it with vigor. But just prior to publication, in the fall of 1973, officials of the parent company got wind of it, looked at it, and were horrified at its “unpatriotic” contents.¹ Mr. William Sarnoff, a high officer of the parent company, for example, was deeply pained by our statement on page 7 of the original that “the leadership in the United States, as a result of its dominant position and wide-ranging counterrevolutionary efforts, has been the most important single instigator, administrator, and moral and material sustainer of serious bloodbaths in the years that followed World War II.” So pained were Sarnoff and his business associates, in fact, that they were quite prepared to violate a contractual obligation in order to assure that no such material would see the light of day.

Although 20,000 copies of the monograph were printed, and one (and the last) ad was placed in the *New York Review of Books*, Warner Publishing refused to allow distribution of the monograph at its scheduled publication date. Media advertising for the volume was cancelled and printed flyers that listed the monograph as one of the titles were destroyed. The officers of Warner Modular were warned that distribution of the document would result in their immediate dismissal.

The publisher struggled to keep open the possibility of distributing the monograph. Since one ostensible reason for suppression was the “one-sidedness” of the document, a compromise was worked out for its release upon roughly concurrent publication of a work that supports the counterrevolutionary violence of the United States; in this case a reprinting of a series of articles by Ithiel de Sola Pool. The concept of a publishing house not being permitted to publish something without either the work itself, or the publisher’s list, meeting somebody’s notion of “balance,” is an extraordinary one. Needless to say it is never applied in the case of pro-establishment productions or potential big money-makers, and the application of the “balance” approach in this case was hardly designed to encourage the free flow of ideas. It was, on the contrary, a means of cutting off one side

that has great difficulty in gaining a hearing in the United States.

The officers of the parent corporation had regarded the “absence of balance” argument as a reason for refusal to permit distribution of our monograph, rather than as calling urgently for publication of material offering a version of the facts more compatible with their needs and perceptions. The idea of a “balancing publication” was reluctantly accepted by the officers of Warner Modular, the publisher, only as a last resort, a means to salvage a monograph to which they were committed and to meet their moral and legal obligations to the authors. The officers of the parent corporation initially went along with this proposal, presumably because the outright suppression of the monograph would have been a little too blatant, and, of course, in violation of the legally binding contract. But they accepted the compromise without enthusiasm, and before it could be implemented, they decided to close down the publishing house and sell its stocks of publications and contracts to a small and quite unknown company loosely affiliated with the parent conglomerate, MSS Information Corporation. This company is not a commercial publisher and lacked distribution facilities. It did not promote its list and at first did not even list the monograph, adding it only after a considerable period on an additions sheet. The monograph could be purchased by someone with prior knowledge of its existence and of the fact that MSS had taken over the rights to it, or by readers of *Radical America*, a small left-wing publication that distributed some copies that they had obtained.

The monograph had a remarkably different history abroad. While unadvertised, unsold, unreviewed, and unnoticed in the U.S., it was translated into French and several other European languages. The French edition appeared with an introduction by Jean-Pierre Faye which discussed the issue of suppression and put the material discussed in the monograph in the context of a Western “Gulag Archipelago” of extensive proportions. In France it went into a second printing and the suppression in the U.S. became a minor cause celebre. The establishment media in France claimed that the monograph was not sold simply because Warner Modular went into bankruptcy, a complete fabrication. To our knowledge, the only notice of the monograph in the English language can be found in the English translation of Jean-Francois Revel’s book *The Totalitarian Temptation* (Penguin, 1977). Here, in the course of a denunciation of the French left for its alleged carelessness with regard to fact, Revel presents an entirely fanciful account of the publishing history, based on his own telephone call to an unidentified friend in the United States.

Despite the substantial interest abroad, it has so far been impossible to provoke any discussion in the country where it was written and to whose population it was addressed

either on the merits of the case presented in the monograph or the matter of its effective suppression by the parent corporation. Well-known advocates of freedom of expression who were apprised of the matter have regarded it as insignificant, presumably on the grounds that there is no issue of state censorship but only of corporate censorship. This reflects, we believe, a characteristic underestimation of the importance of the selective policing of the flow of ideas by means of private structures and constrained access, while all the legal forms of freedom are in place. At a given level of quality, the more critical the message the smaller the proportion of the population that will have an opportunity to consider it at all, and there will be no exposure to such messages day after day (as there is, say, to the merits of a new automobile or low tar cigarette, or to the inflationary effects of government regulation, or to the allegations that North Vietnam committed “aggression” in Vietnam or that a bloodbath would follow the “loss” of Vietnam).²

The history of the suppressed monograph is an authentic instance of private censorship of ideas per se. The uniqueness of the episode lies only in the manner of suppression. Usually, private intervention in the book market is anticipatory, with regrets that the manuscript is unacceptable, perhaps “unmarketable.”³ Sometimes the latter contention is only an excuse for unwillingness to market, although it may sometimes reflect an accurate assessment of how the media and journals will receive books that are strongly critical of the established order. With rare exceptions (e.g., C. Wright Mills’ *Power Elite* or Seymour Hersh’s books on the My Lai massacre and cover up), such works are ignored and allowed to fall still-born from the press, or if reviewed, are dismissed with contempt. In the case of the first edition of this work, events showed that there was an international market, even if the parent corporation was able to prevent a test of the domestic market. But the details of the publication history show that the suppression was strictly a function of the contents of the monograph, not of potential profitability.

By coincidence, the parent corporation that was the agency of the suppression is the publisher (through an affiliate) of the paperback edition of Richard M. Nixon’s memoirs. Both Warner and the hardback publisher of the memoirs, Grosset & Dunlap, have been criticized for their payment of \$2 million for rights to publish and market aggressively the work of a self-confessed prevaricator. The president of Grosset & Dunlap denounced such criticisms in vigorous terms:

I find it difficult to understand such sentiments. It is incredible that anyone should suggest that a book not be published. If we abridge the freedom of any one writer or publisher, we effectively abridge the freedom of all.

The *New York Times* reported that “also in the audience, but not commenting, was William Sarnoff, chairman of Warner Books...”⁴

Introduction: Summary of Major Findings and Conclusions

1.1 Freedom, Aggression and Human Rights

The common view that internal freedom makes for humane and moral international behavior is supported neither by historical evidence nor by reason.¹ The United States itself has a long history of imposing oppressive and terrorist regimes in regions of the world within the reach of its power, such as the Caribbean and Central American sugar and banana republics (Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and the Somozas in Nicaragua were long-lived progeny of U.S. intervention and selection). Since World War II, with the great extension of U.S. power, it has borne a heavy responsibility for the spread of a plague of neofascism, state terrorism, torture and repression throughout large parts of the underdeveloped world. The United States has globalized the “banana republic.” This has occurred despite some modest ideological strain because these developments serve the needs of powerful and dominant interests, state and private, within the United States itself.

The Vietnam War experience is often cited to prove the importance of freedom and dissent in constraining state violence. This assessment seriously misreads the facts of the case. Peace movement activism, growing from and contributing to the popular movements for equality, freedom and social change within the United States, did succeed in raising the domestic costs of the U.S. assault, thus helping to limit in some degree its scope and severity and contributing to the eventual decision that the game was not worth the candle. It did so, of course, mainly by employing modalities that were outside the framework of existing institutions: demonstrations, nonviolent resistance, grass roots organizing, and wide-ranging educational efforts needed to counter the deep commitment of existing institutions to the protection and furthering of the interests of state and private power. The established “free” institutions supported the war, for the most part enthusiastically and uncritically, occasionally with minor and qualified reservations. The principled opposition, based on grounds other than cost-ineffectiveness, functioned outside the major institutional structures. It is, of course, an important fact that a movement was allowed to organize with relatively modest state harassment and violence, and that this movement could make some impact on the course of events. Such developments and the costs of overcoming these and other forms of resistance that impede the actions of national elites are also problems in totalitarian societies, though the toll imposed on protestors in Iran, Argentina, and the Soviet Union is often far more severe. The value of being allowed to

protest relatively unmolested is certainly real, but it should not lead to a disregard of the fact that established institutions, with overwhelmingly dominant power, tend to line up in goose-step fashion in support of any state foreign venture, no matter how immoral (until the cost becomes too high).

The peace movement frightened Western elites. The response of the U.S. (indeed Free World) leadership to the politicization of large parts of the population during the 1960s provides a revealing indication of their concept of “democracy” and of the role of the public in the “democratic process.” In 1975, the Trilateral Commission, representing the more liberal elements of ruling groups in the industrial democracies, published a study entitled *The Crisis of Democracy* which interprets public participation in decision-making as a *threat* to democracy, one that must be contained if elite domination is to persist unhindered by popular demands. The population must be reduced to apathy and conformism if “democracy,” as interpreted by this liberal contingent, is to be kept workable and allowed to survive.²

The most crucial fact relating freedom to the Vietnam War experience is that, despite its free institutions, for over two decades (1949-1975) the United States attempted to subjugate Vietnam by force and subversion, in the process violating the UN Charter, the Geneva Accords of 1954, the Nuremberg Code, the Hague Convention, the Geneva Protocol of 1925, and finally the Paris agreements of 1973.³ For almost a decade the peasants of Indochina served as experimental animals for an evolving military technology—cluster bombs, rockets designed to enter caves where people hid to escape saturation bombing, a fiendish array of anti-personnel weapons; new versions of the long-outlawed “dum-dum” bullet were among the more modest weapons employed.⁴ The population was driven into urban slums by bombing, artillery, and ground attacks that often degenerated into mass murder, in an expanding effort to destroy the social structures in which resistance was rooted. Defenseless peasant societies in Laos and Cambodia were savagely bombed in “secret”—the “secrecy” resulting from the refusal of the mass media to make public facts for which they had ample evidence. Freedom was consistent not only with this expanding savagery, but also with interventions explicitly designed to preserve non-freedom from the threat of freedom (e.g., the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965)⁵ and to displace democratic with totalitarian regimes (e.g., the open subversion of Guatemala in 1954; the slightly more *sub rosa* subversion of democracy in Brazil in 1964 and Chile in 1973).⁶ Free institutions were able to accept, indeed quietly approve of huge massacres in the name of “freedom,” as in Indonesia in 1965-1966—interpreted by U.S.

liberals as evidence for the far-sightedness of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Massive atrocities committed by U.S. client regimes against their own populations or against foreign populations they hope to subdue (e.g., the Indonesian massacres in East Timor) have also proven compatible with freedom and are regularly disguised or ignored by the Free Press.

Whatever the attitudes of the U.S. leadership toward freedom at home—and as noted, this is highly ambiguous—systematic policies towards Third World countries, described in detail below, make it evident that the alleged commitment to democracy and human rights is mere rhetoric, directly contrary to actual policy. The operative principle has been and remains *economic* freedom—meaning freedom for U.S. business to invest, sell, and repatriate profits and its two basic requisites, a favorable investment climate and a specific form of stability.⁷ Since these primary values are disturbed by unruly students, democratic processes, peasant organizations, a free press, and free labor unions, “economic freedom” has often required political servitude. Respect for the rights of the individual, also alleged to be one of the cardinal values of the West, has had little place in the operating procedures applied to the Third World. Since a favorable investment climate and stability quite often require repression, the United States has supplied the tools and training for interrogation and torture and is thoroughly implicated in the vast expansion of torture during the past decade.⁸ When Dan Mitrione came to Uruguay in a police advisory function, the police were torturing with an obsolete electric needle:

Mitrione arranged for the police to get newer electric needles of varying thickness. Some needles were so thin they could be slipped between the teeth. Benitez [a Uruguayan police official] understood that this equipment came to Montevideo inside the U.S. embassy’s diplomatic pouch.⁹

Within the United States itself, the intelligence services were “running torture camps,” as were their Brazilian associates, who “set up a camp modeled after that of the *boinas verdes*, the Green Berets.”¹⁰ And there is evidence that U.S. advisors took an active part in torture, not contenting themselves with supplying training and material means.¹¹ During the Vietnam War, the United States employed on a massive scale improved napalm, phosphorus and fragmentation bombs, and a wide range of other “anti-personnel” weapons that had a devastating effect on civilians. The steady development of weaponry and methods of “interrogation” that inflict enormous pain on the human body and spirit, and the expansion of use of this technology in U.S.-sponsored counterinsurgency warfare and “stabilization” throughout the U.S. sphere of influence, is further evidence that the “sacredness of the individual” is hardly a primary value in the West, at least in its application beyond an elite in-group.¹²

The rationale given for the U.S. buildup of Third World police and military establishments and regular “tilt” toward repressive regimes, is the demands of “security”. This is a wonderfully elastic concept with a virtuous ring that can validate open-ended arms expenditures as well as support for neo-fascism. When it is said that we must oppose Goulart in Brazil or the NLF in South Vietnam for reasons of security, this obviously does not mean that they threaten our survival; it means that their success would be disadvantageous to U.S. interests, and not primarily military interests. It is possible that “security” for a great power and its client government corresponds to heightened insecurity for large numbers within the dominated “secure” state.¹³ This seems to be very much the case for the majorities in Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay, for example.

As Jan Black points out:

The delimitation of what must be secured expands to accommodate what a nation, class, institution, or other social entity has, or thinks it should have. It follows, then, that it is often the nations, groups, or individuals whose wealth and power would appear to make them the most secure who are, in fact, most paranoid....¹⁴

—a comment that applies with striking accuracy to the United States after World War II. In the specific case of the United States, she notes that the concept of security is “all-encompassing, involving economic and political hegemony as well as strictly military considerations....”¹⁵ This flows from the fact of inordinate power and is the propaganda counterpart of the imperial leader’s assumption of the natural right to intervene to keep its subordinates in line. It has the great public relations advantage, also, of built-in self-justification. Who could object to the pitiful giant’s efforts to protect its own security?

1.2 The Semantics of “Terror”

Among the many symbols used to frighten and manipulate the populace of the democratic states, few have been more important than “terror” and “terrorism”. These terms have generally been confined to the use of violence by individuals and marginal groups. Official violence, which is far more extensive in both scale and destructiveness, is placed in a different category altogether. This usage has nothing to do with justice, causal sequence, or numbers abused. Whatever the actual sequence of cause and effect, official violence is described as responsive or provoked (“retaliation,” “protective reaction,” etc.), not as the active and initiating source of abuse. Similarly, the massive long-term violence inherent in the oppressive social structures that U.S. power has supported or imposed is typically disregarded. The numbers tormented and killed by official violence—wholesale as opposed to retail terror—during recent decades have exceeded those of unofficial terrorists by a factor running into the thousands. But this is not “terror,” although one

terminological exception may be noted: while Argentinian “security forces” only retaliate and engage in “police action,” violence carried out by unfriendly states (Cuba, Cambodia) may be designated “terroristic”. The question of proper usage is settled not merely by the official or unofficial status of the perpetrators of violence but also by their political affiliations.

These terminological devices serve important functions. They help to justify the far more extensive violence of (friendly) state authorities by interpreting them as “reactive,” and they implicitly sanction the suppression of information on the methods and scale of official violence by removing it from the category of “terrorism”. Thus in Latin America, “left-wing terrorism is quiescent after a decade and a half of turmoil,” the *New York Times* explains in a summary article on the state of terrorism;¹⁶ it does not discuss any other kind of violence in Latin America—CIA, Argentinian and Brazilian death squads, DINA, etc. Their actions are excluded by definition, and nothing is said about the nature and causes of the “turmoil”. Thus the language is well-designed for apologetics for wholesale terror.

This language is also useful in its connotation of irrational evil, which can be exterminated with no questions asked. The criminally insane have no just grievance that we need trouble to comprehend. On the current scene, for example, the *New York Times* refers to the “cold-blooded and mysterious” Carlos; the South African government, on the other hand, whose single raid on the Namibian refugee camp of Kassinga on May 4, 1978¹⁷ wiped out a far larger total (more than 600) than the combined victims of Carlos, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and the Italian Red Brigades, is not referred to in such invidious terms. Retail terror is “the crime of our times”¹⁸ in the current picture of reality conveyed by the media; and friendly governments are portrayed as the reassuring protectors of the public, striving courageously to cope with “terror”.¹⁹

The limited concept of “terror” also serves as a lightning rod to distract attention from substantive issues, and helps to create a sensibility and frame of mind that allows greater freedom of action by the state. During the Vietnam War, students were the terrorists, and the government and mass media devoted great attention (and much outrage) to their frightful depredations (one person killed, many windows broken).²⁰ The device was used effectively to discredit the antiwar movement as violence-prone and destructive—the motive, of course, for the infiltration of the movement by government provocateurs²¹ —and it helped to divert attention from the official violence that was far more extensive even on the home front, not to speak of Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere. The ploy was amazingly successful in light of the facts, now documented beyond serious

question, even though it did not succeed in destroying the antiwar movement. The terrorism of the Vietnamese enemy was also used effectively in mobilizing public opinion, again a tremendous testimonial to the power of brainwashing under freedom, given the real facts of the matter (discussed in chapter 5 below).

1.3 The Shift in the Balance of Terror to the Free World

Over the past 25 years at least, not only has official terror been responsible for torture and killing on a vastly greater scale than its retail counterpart, but, furthermore, the balance of terror appears to have shifted to the West and its clients, with the United States setting the pace as sponsor and supplier. The old colonial world was shattered during World War II, and the resultant nationalist-radical upsurge threatened traditional Western hegemony and the economic interests of Western business. To contain this threat the United States has aligned itself with elite and military elements in the Third World whose function has been to contain the tides of change. This role was played by Diem and Thieu in South Vietnam and is currently served by allies such as Mobutu in Zaire, Pinochet in Chile, and Suharto in Indonesia. Under frequent U.S. sponsorship the neo-fascist National Security State and other forms of authoritarian rule have become the dominant mode of government in the Third World. Heavily armed by the West (mainly the United States) and selected for amenability to foreign domination and zealous anti-Communism, counterrevolutionary regimes have been highly torture- and bloodshed-prone.

In the Soviet sphere of influence, torture appears to have been on the decline since the death of Stalin. In its 1974 *Report on Torture*, Amnesty International (AI) notes:

Though prison conditions and the rights of the prisoners detained on political charges in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union may still be in many cases unsatisfactory, torture as a government-sanctioned, Stalinist practice has ceased. With a few exceptions (see below) no reports on the use of torture in Eastern Europe have been reaching the outside world in the past decade.²²

In sharp contrast, torture, which “for the last two or three hundred years has been no more than a historical curiosity has suddenly developed a life of its own and become a social cancer.”²³ Since it has declined in the Soviet sphere since the death of Stalin, it would appear that this cancerous growth is largely a Free World phenomenon. The frontispiece describes its distribution within the U.S. sphere of influence. It has shown phenomenal growth in Latin America, where, as AI points out:

There is a marked difference between traditional brutality, stemming from historical conditions, and the systematic torture which has spread to many Latin American countries within the past decade.²⁴

Amnesty International also notes that in some of the Latin American countries “the institutional violence and high incidence of political assassinations has tended to

overshadow the problem of torture.”²⁵ The numbers involved in these official (wholesale) murders have been large: for example, AI estimates 15,000 death squad victims in the small country of Guatemala between 1970 and 1975, a thousand in Argentina in 1975 before the military coup and the unleashing of a true reign of terror.²⁶

The AI Annual Report for 1975-1976 also notes that “more than 80%” of the urgent appeals and actions for victims of human torture have been coming from Latin America.²⁷ One reason for the urgency of these appeals is the nature of this expanding empire of violence, which bears comparison with some of the worst excrescences of European fascism. Hideous torture has become standard practice in the U.S. client fascist states. In the new Chile, to savor the results of the narrow escape of that country from Communist tyranny:

Many people were tortured to death [after the military coup of 1973] by means of endless whipping as well as beating with fists, feet and rifle butts. Prisoners were beaten on all parts of the body, including the head and sexual organs. The bodies of prisoners were found in the Rio Mapocho, sometimes disfigured beyond recognition. Two well-known cases in Santiago are those of Litre Quiroga, the ex-director of prisons under the Allende government, and Victor Jara, Chile’s most popular folksinger. Both were detained in the Estadio Chile and died as a result of the torture received there. According to a recurrent report, the body of Victor Jara was found outside the Estadio Chile, his hands broken and his body badly mutilated. Litre Quiroga had been kicked and beaten in front of other prisoners for approximately 40 hours before he was removed to a special interrogation room where he met his death under unknown circumstances.²⁸

Such horrendous details could be repeated for many thousands of human beings in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Indonesia, U.S.-occupied South Vietnam up to 1975, Iran, and in quite a few other U.S. client states. They clearly reflect state policy over a wide segment of the U.S. sphere of influence. As already noted, much of the electronic and other torture gear is U.S. supplied, and great numbers of client state police and military interrogators are U.S.-trained.²⁹

Latin America has also become the locus of a major diaspora, with hundreds of thousands of academics, journalists, scientists, and other professionals, as well as liberals and radicals of all social classes, driven into exile. This has been a deliberate policy of the military juntas, which one distinguished Latin America journalist calls a “lobotomization” of intellect and the “cultural genocide of our time,”³⁰ with the purpose of removing any source of social criticism or intellectual or leadership base for the general population. Another aspect of the same strategy is, of course, the widespread use of torture and political assassinations to create “a climate of fear and uncertainty to discourage any form of opposition to the ruling elite.”³¹ To find comparable flights into exile on a continental scale, one would have to go back to the experience of fascist Europe, 1933-1940, which provides numerous parallels.³²

1.4 The Churches Versus the Totalitarian Free Enterprise “Development Model”

The client fascist states have behaved with such inhumanity toward the majority of their populations that the conservative churches throughout the U.S. sphere of influence have been driven into an unprecedented opposition, again reminiscent of fascist Europe.³³ The military juntas and assorted dictators have allied themselves with a small local elite and foreign businesses and governments in a joint venture to exploit both the local resources and the 80% or more of the population whose welfare is of no interest to these joint venture partners. An important function of the military juntas has been to destroy all forms of institutional protection for the masses, such as unions, peasant leagues and cooperatives, and political groupings, making them incapable of defending themselves against the larger interests served by the state. As in Europe in the 1930s, only the church has survived as a potential protector of the majority.

The development model applied by the partners is so blatantly exploitative that it has required terror and the threat of terror to assure the requisite passivity. Church documents point out with pungency how the chosen model of development “provokes a revolution that did not exist” and necessitates a National Security State because its brutalities would elicit such indignation “that the only solution has been to impose absolute silence.”³⁴

This and numerous other church cries of protest have received minimal attention in the United States. The “development model” in question is serviceable to U.S. economic interests, one of the joint venture partners, so that the imposition of “absolute silence” by terror is given a respectful, parallel and almost complete silence in the heartland of freedom. The imposition of the development model will be interpreted there, as in a *New York Times* editorial on Brazil, as a bold showing of “more intent on applying corrective medicine than on courting political favor,” with “an early tackling of social reforms” likely to follow a recovery already in sight.³⁵ In short, the churches and people of Latin America and the rest of the client fascist empire stand alone.

1.5 How the Media Cope with Client Fascist Terror (I): Suppression Plus an Emphasis on the Positive

Since the installation and support of military juntas, with their sadistic tortures and bloodbaths, are hardly compatible with human rights, democracy and other alleged Western values, the media and intellectuals in the United States and Western Europe have been hard-pressed to rationalize state policy. The primary solution has been massive

suppression, averting the eyes from the unpleasant facts concerning the extensive torture and killing, the diaspora, the major shift to authoritarian government and its systematic character, and the U.S. role in introducing and protecting the leadership of this client fascist empire. When the Latin American system of torture and exile is mentioned at all, it is done with brevity and “balance”. The latter consists of two elements: one is the regular pretense that the terror is a response to “left-wing guerilla” terror and that the killings on each side are in some kind of rough equivalence. The second is the generous and preponderant attention given to the rationales, explanations and claims of regret and imminent reform on the part of the official terrorists. When elements of the mass media go a little beyond this pattern, as they do on occasion, their efforts are not well-received by other members of the establishment. Thus, an unusually frank ABC documentary on “The Politics of Torture” was greeted by the *New York Times* with petulance and hostility for failing to see the problems posed by “security and economic interests” and/or neglecting the abuses of the Communists.^{[36](#)}

Although, as noted, the torture and killing of political prisoners appears to be more extensive in the Free World than in the Soviet Union and its satellites, the mass media do not dramatize the abuse of individuals in our client states as they do in the case of Soviet intellectuals. Russian dissidents are international heroes, and their trials, personal and legal, and proclamations on all sorts of political and cultural issues, receive front page attention. Who has even heard the names of their vastly more numerous counterparts in the U.S. client states?

The mass media also feature heavily the positives of our military juntas, especially any alleged “improvements”—a release of political prisoners, an increase in GNP, an announced election to be held in 1984, or a slowing up in the rate of inflation—typically offered without reference to a base from which the alleged improvement started. The parlous state of affairs that made the military takeover a regrettable necessity is also frequently emphasized, in preference to any discussion of the needs and interests of international capital. The military juntas and dictators in the U.S. sphere of influence have become quite adept at making the appropriate gestures, timed to coincide with visits of U.S. dignitaries or congressional consideration of budget appropriations. By these tokenistic and public relations devices the dictators demonstrate improvement, our leaders show that we are a force for liberty, and possibly a small number of prisoners may be freed, all this without seriously disturbing the status quo. Client fascist tokenism is often a collaborative effort of dictator and U.S. sponsor, both concerned with improving an image without changing anything fundamental. The Free Press can be counted on to accept these

tokens at face value and without analysis or protest.

A striking example of these procedures is the case of Iran, where a brief experiment with democracy and independence was terminated by a CIA-sponsored coup in 1953, leading to the imposition of a regime that became one of the terror centers of the world. According to a report of the International Commission of Jurists:

The tremendous power wielded by the SAVAK [secret police] is reflected in the fact that the chief is given the title of Deputy Prime Minister. The SAVAK permeates Iranian society and is reported to have agents in the political parties, labor unions, industry, tribal societies, as well as abroad—especially where there are concentrated numbers of Iranian students.³⁷

The number of officially acknowledged executions of political prisoners in the three years prior to 1977 was some 300; and estimates of the total number of political prisoners run from 25,000 to 100,000. They are not well-treated. Martin Ennals, Secretary-General of Amnesty International, noted that Iran has the

...highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture which is beyond belief. No country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran.³⁸

The Iranian secret police has received generous training and support from the United States, which has deluged its Iranian client with arms, “priming” it, as a Senate report noted, to serve as the gendarme for U.S. interests throughout the crucial oil-producing regions of the Middle East. When the Iranian people rose in an astonishing and completely unexpected demonstration of mass popular opposition to the terror and corruption of the Shah, the Free Press obediently described this bloody tyrant as a great “liberalizer” who was attempting to bring to his backward country the benefits of modernization, opposed by religious fanatics and left-wing students. *Newsweek* described the demonstrators as “an unlikely coalition of Muslim fundamentalists and leftist activists” (22 May 1978) while *Time* added that “the Shah also has a broad base of popular support” (5 June 1978). Citing these and many other examples in a review of press coverage, William A. Dorman and Ehsan Omad write that “We have been unable to find a single example of a news or feature story in the mainstream American press that uses the label ‘dictator’ to describe the Shah.”³⁹ There is barely a mention in the media of the facts on the magnitude of corruption, the scale of police terror and torture,⁴⁰ the significance of the fantastic expenditures for arms⁴¹—the police and military establishments are probably the only elements of Iranian society that could be described as fully “modernized”—and the devastating effects on the majority of the population of the agricultural reforms and urban priorities.⁴²

As the Shah’s U.S.-armed troops murdered hundreds of demonstrators in the streets,

President Carter sent his support, reaffirming the message he had delivered in Teheran several months earlier, when he stated at a banquet:

Iran under the great leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership, and to the respect, admiration and love which your people give to you.⁴³

Meanwhile, the Pentagon dispatched arms and counterinsurgency technology,⁴⁴ while the press deplored the failure of the Iranian people to comprehend the Shah's beneficence or described him as "not repressive enough"—the "saddest aspect of developments in Iran," according to the liberal *New Republic*.⁴⁵ Much emphasis was placed, as usual, on his promises of reform. The servility of the media could hardly have been more dramatically displayed.

The annual survey of human rights put out by the U.S. State Department has this primary characteristic: it strives consistently and without intellectual scruple to put a good face on totalitarian states within our sphere of influence. The bias is so great, the willingness to accept factual claims and verbal promises of military juntas is so blatant, the down-playing of the claims and pain of the victims of official terror is so obvious, that *these reports are themselves solid evidence of the primary official commitment to the dispensers of terror rather than its victims*.⁴⁶ They constitute a defense of client fascism, not of human rights. The highly touted "human rights program" must be understood in this context.

The technique of "emphasizing the positive" is also used in other ways to whitewash the behavior of the prime sponsor of Third World fascism. A familiar device is the self-congratulation that regularly attends any decrement in barbarism or aggression. For example, the regular Washington correspondent of the *New Yorker*, regarded as a leading liberal commentator, wrote in 1974 that "we have brought ourselves satisfaction and at least a modicum of self-respect by withdrawing our combat troops from Indo-China."⁴⁷ The *Washington Post* also assures us, in an editorial retrospective on the "good impulses" that led to such tragic error in Vietnam, that the United States "in the last days, made what seems to us an entirely genuine and selfless attempt to facilitate a political solution that would spare the Vietnamese further suffering"⁴⁸—very touching, after a quarter-century of brutality and terror, and also untrue.⁴⁹

Perhaps a search through the records of Murder Inc. would also reveal documents praising the thugs in charge for their display of humanitarian benevolence in offering a temporary respite to its victims.

1.6 How the Media Cope with Client Terror (II): The Pretense That the U.S. Is an Innocent Bystander, Rather Than Sponsor and Supporter of Client Fascism

The military juntas of Latin America and Asia are *our* juntas. Many of them were directly installed by us or are the beneficiaries of our direct intervention, and most of the others came into existence with our tacit support, using military equipment and training supplied by the United States. Our massive intervention and subversion over the past 25 years has been confined almost exclusively to overthrowing reformers, democrats, and radicals—we have rarely “destabilized” right-wing military regimes no matter how corrupt or terroristic.⁵⁰ This systematic bias in intervention is only part of the larger system of connections—military, economic, and political—that have allowed the dominant power to shape the primary characteristics of the other states in its domains in accordance with its interests.

The Brazilian counterrevolution, as we have noted (cf. note 6), took place with the connivance of the United States and was followed by immediate recognition and consistent support, just as in Guatemala ten years earlier and elsewhere, repeatedly. The military junta model has been found to be a good one, and the United States has helped it flourish and spread. Torture, death squads and freedom of investment are related parts of the approved model sponsored and supported by the leader of the Free World. Terror in these states is functional, improving the “investment climate,” at least in the short-run, and U.S. aid to terror-prone states, as we show below, is *positively related to terror and improvement of investment climate and negatively related to human rights* (Chapter 2, section 1.1, Table 1). It turns out, therefore, that if we cut through the propaganda barrage, *Washington has become the torture and political murder capital of the world*. Torture and political murder in the United States itself are absolutely and relatively low, and obviously provide no basis for such a harsh judgment. But the United States is the power center whose quite calculated and deliberate policy and strategy choices have brought about a system of clients who consistently practice torture and murder on a terrifying scale.

Some of the regimes in our sphere of influence have a fair amount of autonomy and may do things on occasion that our leadership does not like, much as Rumania or Poland in Eastern Europe may press the limits of Russian tolerance. When Guatemala or the Dominican Republic go too far in seeking independence or major socio-economic change incompatible with the approved model, however, the mailed fist will strike, as in Hungary or Czechoslovakia.⁵¹ Brazil, a substantial power in its own right, can go its own way in

part, though how far is not clear; it was only as far back as 1964 that the United States intervened to help mold Brazil into a state more to the taste of the U.S.-business community. The U.S. sphere of client states is as homogeneous—and as agreeable to the interest of the dominant power—as the states of Eastern Europe in relation to the USSR.

It is convenient to pretend that Guatemala, South Korea and the Philippines are “independent” in contrast to Rumania, Poland, and Hungary which are puppets of the Soviet Union. In this manner U.S. responsibility for terror in its sphere can be dismissed, while the Soviet Union’s imposition of tyranny and crushing of freedom in its sphere can be sanctimoniously deplored. Given our role in creating and sustaining our terror-prone clients, our training and supply programs, our continued support for them on all fundamentals, their relative homogeneity and role in the U.S.-dominated global economy, their alleged independence and our posture of innocent and concerned bystander must be taken simply as principles of state propaganda.

1.7 How the Media Cope with Client Terror (III): “Atrocities Management” and the Demand for Communist Abuses

Another established technique for diverting attention from the ongoing torture and bloodbaths and deteriorating social-political environment in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Indonesia (to cite a few examples) is to concentrate attention on Communist abuses, real and mythical. Although Communist terrorism in Vietnam was always relatively modest compared to that of the Saigon government, and paled into virtual insignificance when compared to our own,⁵² the U.S. government and mass media created the opposite impression by selective emphasis of fact, outright lies, and a very effective program of “atrocities management.” The contention by right wing critics of the press that the media overplayed our bad behavior and understated that of the Vietnamese enemy can be properly interpreted in this way: if the disproportion of violence was 100 (U.S.) to 1 (NLF),⁵³ and the media attention ratio was 1:1, then while the media would have been underplaying our violence by 100:1, the right-wingers had a point that we were still allowed to see *something* of what we were doing to our victims.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, as we show in the text below, the media’s massive suppressions and institutionalization of lies and myths in the face of one of the most savage attacks on a helpless population in history, does it credit as an effective instrument of state propaganda.

As we have pointed out (see section 5, this chapter), the media occasionally present a glimpse of the real world of subfascist terror, a departure from orthodoxy that evokes

predictable outrage on the part of guardians of the faith. Tom Buckley's *New York Times* review of the ABC documentary on torture in the U.S. sphere (see note 36) nicely illustrates the techniques that are used to overcome such occasional deviations. According to Buckley, ABC "can't get it through its head that the United States cannot easily transform repressive and unstable governments into humane ones..." and that "the United States, despite its best intentions, must balance what are perceived as its security and economic interests with the effort to improve human rights." Typically, it is presupposed, not argued, that the United States has "good intentions" but is limited in its ability to bring about reforms. Buckley evidently "can't get it through his head" that the United States has in fact imposed and supported these repressive governments and provided them with the means to remain "stable" in the face of popular reaction to their torture and repression. Buckley complains further that the ABC documentary "fails to establish a historical or social context," by which he means: fails to provide appropriate apologetics for the U.S. role. His comment is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that ABC, in a rare departure from the standards of the Free Press, did in fact make some mention of the role of U.S. economic interests in the subfascist empire; that is, did touch on the actual historical and social context, a serious lapse from the point of view of the *New York Times*. Buckley further laments the failure of the documentary to point out that "we haven't done badly on behalf of the Jews of the Soviet Union"—which is false, but even if true would be about as relevant as a defense of Soviet human rights practices by a Russian Buckley who objects that "we haven't done badly on behalf of the Wilmington 10." Finally, in this review of a documentary focusing on Chile, Iran and the Philippines, Buckley writes: "More to the point is the fact that Communist dictatorships" do not permit free inquiry into their repressive practices. Why this has any bearing on the facts of torture in the U.S. client states or proper U.S. policy towards that problem, Buckley fails to explain.

In the post-Vietnam War era the need for Communist abuses has been no less pressing than before. More facts have come to light on the scope of U.S. violence in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the extent to which U.S. officials lied to the public with regard to their programs and methods, and the brazenness with which these officials defied treaty obligations and international law. Much as the government and the media tried to isolate the scoundrelism of Watergate from the much more profound immorality of the "secret" devastation of Cambodia, the linkage between the two could not be entirely concealed and therefore tended to discredit still further the campaign to bring "freedom" to South Vietnam. Counterrevolution, torture and official murder in Argentina, Guatemala, Chile, and other U.S. satellites was also reaching new peaks. Thus, if Cambodian terror did not

exist, the Western propaganda systems would have had to invent it, and in certain respects they did, a matter which we will discuss at length in Volume II, chapter 6.⁵⁵

Three features of the propaganda campaign with regard to Cambodia deserve special notice. The first is its vast and unprecedented scope. Editorial condemnation of Cambodian “genocide” in the mainstream media dates from mid-1975, immediately following the victory of the so-called “Khmer Rouge.”⁵⁶ After that time the Western media were deluged with condemnations of Cambodia, including not only regular reporting in the press and news weeklies but also articles in such mass circulation journals as the *Readers Digest* (with tens of millions of readers in the United States and abroad), *TV Guide*, and for the intellectual elite, the *New York Review*, the *New Republic*, etc. In contrast, interpretations of developments in Cambodia that departed from the theme of systematic genocide received virtually no attention. The volume of the chorus proclaiming “genocide” and the careful exclusion of conflicting facts (and the context or history) made the occasional expression of skepticism appear pathological, much as if someone were to proclaim that the earth is flat.

A second major feature of the propaganda campaign was that it involved a systematic distortion or suppression of the highly relevant historical context as well as substantial fabrication—the grim reality evidently did not suffice for the needs of propaganda—and fabrication persisted even after exposure, which was regarded as irrelevant in the face of a “higher truth” that is independent of mere fact. Furthermore, the more inflated the claims and the more completely the evidence was presented in a historical vacuum, attributed strictly to Communist villainy, the greater the audience likely to be reached.

A third striking feature of the campaign was the constant pretense that the horrors of Cambodia are being ignored except for the few courageous voices that seek to pierce the silence, or that some great conflict was raging about the question of whether or not there have been atrocities in Cambodia. In France and the United States, in particular, such pretense reached comic proportions. This particular feature of Western propaganda was apparently internalized by the intelligentsia, who came to believe it in dramatic defiance of the obvious facts. To cite one example, in the *New York Times* (22 September 1977) the well-known philosopher Walter Kaufmann, often a thoughtful commentator on moral and political issues, had an article entitled “Selective Compassion” in which he contrasts “the lack of international outrage, protests, and pressure in the face of what has been going on in Cambodia” with the compassion that is felt for the Arabs under Israeli military occupation. His comparison is doubly remarkable. By September 1977, condemnation of

Cambodian atrocities, covering the full political spectrum with the exception of some Maoist groups, had reached a level and scale that has rarely been matched, whereas the situation of the Arabs under Israeli military occupation (or indeed, in Israel itself) is virtually a taboo topic in the United States. For example, the U.S. media are outraged over the fact that children work in Cambodia (rarely inquiring into conditions or circumstances or comparing the situation in other peasant societies), but accept with equanimity what is called in Israel “the Children’s market,” where children as young as six or seven years old are brought at 4 a.m. to pick fruit at subsistence wages or less for Israeli collective settlements.⁵⁷ Similarly the odes to Israeli democracy that are a constant refrain in the U.S. media are careful to exclude any mention of the fact that a system of quasi-national institutions has been established (to which U.S. citizens make tax-deductible gifts) to ensure that land use and development funds are reserved to those Israeli citizens who are Jews—comparable anti-Semitic regulations in the Soviet Union would be a major scandal, and would certainly not be subsidized by the U.S. government. Even the human rights organizations in the United States have been scrupulous in suppressing information about the treatment of Arabs. (See chapter 3, note 67.)

In the light of the indisputable facts, how can we explain the fact that a literate and serious person can believe that “selective compassion” in the United States is devoted to Arabs under Israeli rule while “strikingly” avoiding what has been going on in Cambodia, and can express this astonishing view without challenge—indeed, it is received with sage nods of approval. Only on the assumption that Arabs intrinsically lack human rights, so that even the slightest attention to their fate is excessive, whereas the principles of Western ideology are so sacrosanct that even a vast chorus of condemnation of an enemy still does not reach some approved standard—that is, only by a combination of chauvinist and racist assumptions that are quite remarkable when spelled out clearly, though standard among the Western intelligentsia.

1.8 Cambodia: Why the Media Find It More Newsworthy Than Indonesia and East Timor

The way in which the media have latched on to Cambodian violence, as a drowning man seizes a lifebuoy, is an object lesson as to how the U.S. media serve first and foremost to mobilize opinion in the service of state ideology. When somewhere between 500,000 and a million people were butchered in the anti-Communist counterrevolution of 1965-1966 in Indonesia, almost total silence prevailed in Congress and in editorials in the U.S. press—a few tut-tuts, many more “objective” statements of how this is beneficially affecting the

structure of power in Southeast Asia, how it shows the effectiveness of our Vietnam strategy, which is providing a “shield” for “democracy in Asia,” and some suggestions that the “Communists” got what they deserved in a spontaneous uprising of “the people.”⁵⁸ This bloodbath involved *approved victims* and a political change consistent with U.S. business and strategic interests—what we refer to as a “constructive bloodbath” in the text below. Even today, as regards East Timor, where our corrupt and brutal Indonesian satellite (authors of the 1965-1966 butcheries) has very possibly killed as many people as did the Khmer Rouge, there is a virtually complete blackout of information in the Free Press.⁵⁹ This is a bloodbath carried out by a friendly power and is thus of little interest to our leaders. It is a “benign bloodbath” in our terminology.

An effective propaganda apparatus disregards such cases of violence. It also downplays lesser but significant terror and bloodshed such as has prevailed in Argentina in the years 1975-78 since, in the words of David Rockefeller, “I have the impression that finally Argentina has a regime which understands the private enterprise system.”⁶⁰ Important lessons are not to be drawn from official terror in states that understand the private enterprise system, but Cambodian terror, although in crucial respects a derivative of U.S. terror, could usefully be served up to the U.S. public on an almost daily regimen.

1.9 Media Self-Censorship: Or Why Two Soviet Dissidents Are Worth More Than 20,000 Tormented Latins

The system of self-censorship, which pursues Communist abuses avidly while studiously ignoring the terror-ridden states of Latin America, is not a product of any explicit conspiracy. There *are* powerful governmental and media interests that do try deliberately to dredge up Communist abuse stories as part of a systematic effort at brainwashing. Many examples will appear below. But many media agencies engage in the same kind of selectivity out of their own ideological conditioning and the pressures of larger interests that encourage attention to Communist terror and discourage undue attention to abuses in client states. There are no powerful interests embarrassed by tales of Khmer Rouge terror, a Moscow dissident’s trial, or the suffering of postwar Vietnam; in fact, interests opposed to a larger role for government in social welfare and supportive of the arms race favor such emphases on grounds of ideological serviceability. In the summer of 1978, the *New York Times* featured attacks on Secretary of State Vance for not calling off strategic arms talks with the Soviet Union because of the trial of two dissidents. The prime source of pressure was alleged to be the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, a super-cold war group whose concern for dissidents west of the Elbe has been negligible.⁶¹ Nothing is

more obvious than that Soviet human rights victims were being used by this group for larger political purposes, and that the alleged concern for human rights was strictly a strategic ploy.

There would be strong objections to a constant stream of stories on U.S.-created orphans, prostitutes, starving children, destruction of fields and forests, and the continuing hundreds of deaths in Indochina from unexploded ordnance, or on the depredations of U.S. client states using U.S. arms, as in East Timor. No less hostility would be engendered by a daily focus on the prisons, tortures, disappearances, and accounts of refugees from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—these are *our* clients and our banks and major multinationals are pleased with the “stability” brought by the torturers.⁶² “Security” seems a more acceptable basis for supporting gangsters and torturers than mere money-making, so the former is always adduced disingenuously as our sole source of interest.

The mass media everywhere tend to serve the important interests that dominate the state and select and suppress facts so as to convey the impression that national policy is well-intentioned and justified. Much the same is true, quite commonly, of those areas of academic scholarship that deal with contemporary affairs or social issues. The difference between a society with official censorship (e.g., the Soviet Union) and one without (the United States) is real and significant,⁶³ but the extent and especially the policy consequences of such differences are often overrated. There is a corresponding tendency to underestimate the significance of self-censorship and the strength of the underlying factors that make for unified mass media support for foreign policy—notably, the force of nationalism, government pressure and resources, and the overlap and community of interest among government, media, and business leaders, who jointly dominate state policy-making. Thus, if the dominant interests of a free society call for a policy of foreign aggression, the mass media will voluntarily mobilize the population as effectively as under a fully censored system.⁶⁴ Mild indications of doubt and reservations on grounds of cost-ineffectiveness have little influence on policy, but do serve to convey the erroneous impression that the imperial effort is based on democratic decision-making. Fundamental criticism that openly rejects the basic premises of the propaganda system, especially the assumption of the essential justice and decency of any major foreign venture, may be granted token appearance as an oddity in the mass media, but is generally confined to journals and pamphlets that are guaranteed to reach no more than a tiny fraction of the population. Exceptions to these generalizations are rare and unusual.

In the summer of 1978, the trials of Aleksandr Ginzburg and Anatoly Shcharansky in

the Soviet Union received far more news coverage in the mass media of the United States than was accorded the last 20,000 cases of severe torture and murder by U.S. satellite governments in Latin America. Since official torture and murder in Latin America now appear to surpass the level of such abuses in the Soviet bloc and are carried out by governments nurtured, trained, and financed by the United States, and the international financial institutions it dominates, this is not a matter of the pot calling the kettle black; it is the *stove* calling the kettle black! Yet the self-censorship and ideological conditioning of the media is such that even the few remaining liberal columnists seem hardly aware of the ludicrous and hypocritical imbalance. They write as if the United States were struggling valiantly, devotedly, and with clean hands for a better world in which human rights will be respected, and just happened to locate two victims in the Soviet Union, and miss, by chance, the 20,000 brutalized in its own backyard. (See also Chapter 3, note 78.)

1.10 Corruption as a Primary Characteristic of U.S. Client States

In Vietnam the legendary corruption of “our” Vietnamese—and their unwillingness to fight—always presented to U.S. imperial officialdom a puzzling contrast to the apparent honesty and superb fighting qualities of the Vietnamese enemy. The explanation was always simple—the Vietnamese willing to serve the United States were “denationalized,” that is, they had lost touch with their own culture, and were essentially rootless mercenaries. The Vietnamese elite had a deep contempt for their own people and were quite prepared to cooperate with a “superior” culture and power in destroying their own society. The world-view of this elite was formed out of its own institutional interests, increasingly tied to the largesse of the external power and to the anti-Communist and counterrevolutionary ideology of the Godfather.

There is a close similarity of ideology among the predominantly military leaders of the U.S. client states, based on an incredibly simple Manichean view of the forces of evil (Communism) versus the forces of good (the United States, military officers, and free enterprise), all of it about on a John Birch Society level of sophistication. There is a regular pattern of identifying reform and any criticism of the status quo with Communism, and seeing in any such outcroppings external and subversive evils that must be extirpated.⁶⁵ There is solid evidence that this fascistic ideology has flowed in good part from the training and viewpoints of the U.S. military and civil establishment.⁶⁶

The denationalized client fascist elites of such countries as pre-1975 South Vietnam

and post-1964 Brazil have had a usually weak internal minority base of comprador and conservative business interests and a dominant external support base in a foreign economic and military establishment. Devoid of any economic ideas of their own, these elites resort to a dogmatic adherence to free enterprise (good enough for the emulated superpower) and an open door to foreign investment as the road to prosperity.⁶⁷

Economically illiterate, pretending to be “nonpartisan” technocrats who are going to clean up civilian corruption, these elites are perfect instruments of corruption. In state after client state, from Argentina to Zaire, the installation of military juntas has brought with it a new power and role for foreign business and *corruption as a system*. U.S. businessmen and their spokesmen contend that the spread of bribery as a means of doing business is not their doing—they claim that it is usually extortion, and that competition forces it upon them. What is neglected in this kind of rationalization (which understates the frequent reciprocity involved in payoffs) is that the regimes that are so corruption-prone are products of U.S. initiative. They are part of a package that includes rule by a denationalized minority, repression of the majority, and corruption flowing out of the dependent status of rulers and the interests of their external sponsors.

1.11 Corruption and Terror as a Feedback Process: How the U.S. Undermines Its Own Democratic Order as It Sustains Counterrevolution Abroad

In the early 1960s Robert McNamara, with his characteristic insight and prescience, argued for expanded support and training of the Latin American military on the grounds of the beneficial effect of their contact with democratic values. Between 1960 and 1969, 11 constitutionally elected governments were displaced by military dictatorships. This further enhanced the power of the U.S. military, given their closer relationships with the new dictators and the need to aid them further in consolidating their minority positions and improving “security”.⁶⁸

Since World War II, as the CIA and U.S. military have expanded their operations abroad to counter popular threats, their power within the United States itself has increased. They have been able to evade congressional mandates and define and enlarge their own missions; and, concomitantly, it is plausibly argued that despite the immense growth in armaments and frequent intervention abroad our “security” has declined. It probably *has* declined not only in the sense of a greater *feeling* of insecurity (based on symbolic manipulations by the military and its cold war allies), but because the nuclear arms race has steadily increased the capacity for mutual destruction. Counterrevolutionary violence

and the growth of U.S. intelligence and military forces have created a huge vested interest in weapons, fear, insecurity, and ideologies conducive to further enlargement of the military-industrial-intelligence complex.

Counterrevolutionary violence abroad has also fed back to the home front in other ways. The spinoff of U.S.-sponsored terror groups has become positively embarrassing, with former CIA operatives like Orlando Bosch and other fascistic Cuban exiles trained to invade and subvert Cuba, now “old boys in the Latin American terrorist network,”⁶⁹ bombing and killing in Miami and elsewhere,⁷⁰ but often virtually “prosecution proof” because of CIA connections. Even more important has been the cross-country murder network of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, whose secret police and death squads range freely over one another’s territory in the hunt for dissidents. This is an achievement of the U.S. military—a matter of pride, as one of its objectives has been to foster “the coordinated employment of internal security forces within and among Latin American countries....”⁷¹ These official terrorists have become more bold, engaging in kidnappings and political murder outside the co-fascist sphere. The murder of Orlando Letelier and Ronnie Moffitt on the streets of Washington, D.C., arranged by the Chilean secret police, was a mistake, however; the imperial power cannot allow its own capital to be the scene of the kind of unseemly operations that are daily occurrences within the territories of its clients.⁷²

The feedback of corruption from South Korea to the U.S. Congress has also provided impressive evidence of the convergent tendencies of client fascism and its parent.⁷³ The most interesting aspect of the case is the fact that the Nixon administration knew that a foreign power was illegally bribing U.S. legislators and did nothing about it. The South Koreans were bribing the right people for a sound purpose, so that the flow of money could be considered analogous to the financing of CREEP from illicit sources. The CIA would forge documents to discredit foreign politicians in Brazil or Chile, and the Nixon administration would forge documents to discredit Kennedy or some other enemy politicians. In Brazil, a CIA front organization would use extorted and laundered U.S. money to subsidize amenable politicians, and a scholar on Brazil finds it an “overwhelming temptation to compare the *modus operandi* of this organization (a Brazilian front of the CIA) to that of Richard Nixon’s Committee for the Re-election of the President (CREEP).”⁷⁴ Brazil, was in fact, a model for Nixon.⁷⁵ John Connally, a spokesman for a wide spectrum of U.S. business interests, asserted that “the United States could well look to the Brazilian example to put its own economy in order.”⁷⁶ With our

huge military and intelligence establishment, and a business community impressed with the technocratic “efficiency” of Brazilian fascism in keeping the lower orders passive as living standards decline under the “economic miracle,” and in general in providing a superb industrial climate, is it possible that “convergence” will consist not in their becoming more like us so much as in our becoming more like them?

1.12 The New Vietnam: Or How to Abuse and Boycott a Savaged Victim That Is Behaving in a Way Contrary to Official Forecasts

While Cambodia has received maximum attention in the media, the treatment of Vietnam has been equally illuminating on the possibilities of brainwashing under freedom. The allegedly murderous and vengeful instincts of the Communists and the inevitability of a postwar bloodbath were a war propaganda staple from 1965-1975, endlessly and uncritically repeated.⁷⁷ Given the brutal character of the Vietnam War, the killing of collaborators and torturers and just plain vengeance killing were plausibly to be expected. In a phenomenon that has few parallels in Western experience, there appear to have been close to zero retribution deaths in postwar Vietnam. This miracle of reconciliation and restraint, instead of receiving respectful attention in the West and generating some soul-searching over another exposed layer of official fabrications, has been almost totally ignored.⁷⁸ The search has been exclusively for flaws. Instead of killing collaborators and torturers, the victors sent them to reeducation camps, so the media focus on that atrocity.⁷⁹ There is poverty and hardship in this ravaged land, and many people who were habituated to the affluence of war and a corruption-based totalitarian free enterprise economy have fled, along with many others unhappy with the harsh economic conditions or the authoritarian discipline of the new regime, or fearing retribution for collaboration and war crimes. The media have focused on these refugees, whose flight is interpreted as a mark of failure of post-Thieu Vietnam, rather than on the huge majority who are attempting to rebuild their country, or the hundreds of thousands of orphans, drug addicts, prostitutes, or seriously wounded, whom the Vietnamese leadership is trying to rehabilitate in an effort to overcome the legacy of a shattered economy and social order left by their U.S. benefactors.

The concern for refugees, much like other aspects of the new “human rights” commitment, is highly selective. Thus refugees from postwar Indochina arouse memories of the Holocaust and their suffering is portrayed with great indignation, while there is near total silence when 200,000 Burmese Muslims flee to Bangladesh in a two-month period in

the spring of 1978 or when 140,000 Filipino refugees escape their oppressors, not to speak of the vast flow of exiles from the torture chambers constructed under U.S. auspices in Latin America. Furthermore, the compassion for refugees from Communism is not coupled with any thought of helping the countries ravaged by the United States to overcome the conditions that are surely a major cause for their flight. Mennonite social workers inform us that many thousands of children face death from starvation in Laos, while in Vietnam too there is hunger, even starvation, as a consequence of the war and natural catastrophes. Even the most saintly of regimes would be forced to resort to Draconian measures under such circumstances. But we read nothing of this in the mass media, which have no time for such trivialities. It is much more convenient to depict the conditions of Indochina as though they result solely from the depravity of the Communists, and to reserve sympathy for those who flee.

The portrayal of a drab Vietnam, with a harsh life, flight of refugees, and political prisoners, has several functions. First, it is offered as “justification” for our earlier efforts and helps us maintain our self-esteem by showing that life did turn out to be pretty bad under the Communists. This requires disciplined avoidance of any focus on the fact that the Indochinese are compelled to struggle upward from stone-age conditions largely of our making. Second, the grim prospects, and the suppression of the U.S. responsibility for them, helps to justify our continued hostility and refusal to aid the victims.⁸⁰

1.13 The U.S. Record in Vietnam—and What Our Obligations and Policies Would Be on the Basis of Minimal Justice

As we discuss in the text below, the historical record, including an accumulating body of official documents, shows that the U.S. leadership knew from its earliest involvement that the Communists in Vietnam were the only political movement with mass popular support and that the faction it supported was a foreign implant (Diem, in fact, was imported from the United States). Joseph Buttinger, an early advisor to Diem and one of his most outspoken advocates in the 1950s, contends that the designation “fascist” is inappropriate for Diem because, although his regime had most of the vicious characteristics of fascism, he lacked the mass base that a Hitler or Mussolini could muster.⁸¹ This is true of other U.S. junta-satellite regimes, which should perhaps be designated “subfascist,” lacking the degree of legitimacy of a genuine fascist regime. (Henceforth in this book we will use the term “subfascist” as an appropriate designation for the members of the system of U.S.-sponsored client fascist states.)

The U.S. assault on the Indochinese was quite consciously undertaken to smash them into submission to minority, subfascist agents chosen by the U.S. government. By a reasonable use of familiar terms this was plain aggression. If the facts were faced, and international law and elemental morality were operative, thousands of U.S. politicians and military planners would be regarded as candidates for Nuremberg-type trials. And the United States would be paying reparations proportionate to the vast destruction it caused. Although as one Laotian farmer, whose wife and three children were killed by the U.S. Air Force, said to an AFSC representative, when asked what the United States could do to redeem itself: “We want back those lives that were lost.”⁸²

But given the arrogance of self-righteous power, and the willingness of the media to conceal the central U.S. role as a destroyer without the slightest legal or moral basis for its actions, there will be no reparations and standard U.S. histories will write of a valiant but unsuccessful U.S. effort to protect freedom against Communist terror and subversion.

1.14 The Touch of Racism in U.S. Policy Toward Indochina

There was an important racist underpinning to the assault on Vietnam that was not fundamental to it but greatly facilitated the manipulation and destruction. From MacArthur to Westmoreland, the refrain that Orientals are essentially lower animals who don’t feel pain as sensitive Westerners do and who only respect force, had its effect on policy. The Vietnamese have the mentality of six-year-olds, and mumble to each other in a vocabulary of a few hundred words, so we learn from the head of the U.S. Information Agency in Saigon, John Mecklin—a critical supporter of U.S. involvement.⁸³ “Ours has been a reasonable strategy,” another liberal analyst of the U.S. war explained, but it was “the strategy of those who are rich, who love life and fear ‘costs’.” For us, “death and suffering are irrational choices when alternatives exist,” but we failed to comprehend that such a strategy will not be effective when applied against those who do not love life or try to avoid suffering. Thus the weak invite us to carry our “strategic logic to its conclusion, which is genocide,” but we balk, because we recognize that “genocide is a terrible burden to bear” and would contradict “our own value system.”⁸⁴

Penalties against illegal attacks on “our” Vietnamese were so light that military lawyers in Vietnam coined the phrase, “mere Gook rule,” to describe military-judicial treatment of offenders.⁸⁵ The corruptibility of our own puppets furthered this contempt, as did the very poverty and helplessness of the peasant victims (who thus “invite us” to destroy them) in a frustrating war where the superior race could kill and destroy but not conquer. It is easier

to ignore the destruction of “mere gooks” than non-gooks, and to become enraged over the killing of whites in Rhodesia as compared with mere Africans in Mozambique or Namibia.

1.15 The New Human Rights Movement—Only Victims East of the Elbe Need Apply

In the post-World War II era the “Washington connection” has been strongly correlated with the proliferation of regimes of terror and oppression. As we have noted, the linkage arises out of the significant positive relationship between subfascism and “a favorable investment climate” and the long-standing predominance of investment criteria over human rights considerations. Under “conservative” administrations the United States supports subfascism aggressively and with little bother for the public relations aspects of human rights issues. Under “liberal” auspices, the United States supports subfascism no less aggressively—sometimes even more so—but sometimes urges its leaders to give it a more human face.

Despite this linkage, the people who brought us Tiger Cages, Provincial Interrogation Centers, saturation bombings as a device to “urbanize” South Vietnam, death squads, and military juntas, and their spokesmen and apologists in the mass media and academia, are now deeply concerned with human rights—but almost exclusively in the Communist world. Anthony Lewis explains this apparent bias as a consequence of the fact that within the Soviet sphere “the afflicted individuals are enough like us so that we identify with them—and because their stories are often such nightmares of cruelty.”⁸⁶ The likeness hypothesis may have an element of truth; the endless suffering of peasants and slum dwellers rarely elicits from the privileged more than an occasional clucking of tongues or a remark on the cruelty of fate. But the hypothesis is still difficult to sustain. Chiang Kai-shek was not very much “like us,” but we had little trouble “identifying with him,” or so the actions of our democratic government would indicate. The numerous murdered and tortured intellectuals of Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile include many who are much more “like” U.S. writers than Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, but their brutalized bodies rarely make it to the *Times* or the *Post*. As for “nightmares of cruelty,” there is an endless supply that could be culled from just Indonesia and East Timor if anyone with dependable access to the media were interested. People are dying today throughout Indochina from starvation, disease, and unexploded ordnance that are one small part of the legacy of the U.S. war, but the new advocates of human rights seem to have little concern. There is not a whisper of protest in the press when the president states that we owe the people of

Vietnam no debt and have no responsibility to rebuild what we have destroyed because “the destruction was mutual,” no less.⁸⁷

The linkage between U.S. interests and power, on the one hand, and severe human rights violations, on the other, is systematic, not accidental. A potent complex of business and financial interests, military-intelligence-State Department bureaucrats, and politicians are concerned exclusively with investment climate and the dependability of military clients, and this structure of interests has long determined the broad sweep of policy. Liberals and humanitarians in public office have found “business confidence” sagging and hostile forces quickly mobilized when they push too far, even verbally, in the direction of taking human rights values seriously. The system has its own dynamic, which has spawned the human rights arrangements that we now find in Chile, Paraguay, and the Philippines. The U.S. defeat in Indochina led to no institutional changes within this country. Even the doctrinal system, bruised by the revelations of the war, has been quickly restored. It is sheer romanticism, under these circumstances, to expect that a sudden concern for human rights might significantly influence the foreign policy of the United States.

Thus far, in fact, the Carter human rights campaign—mainly one of words rather than deeds, in any case—has been relatively strong on Soviet and Cambodian violations of civil rights and weak or nonexistent on human rights in U.S. client states. Arms sales, credits, gifts and training programs continue virtually unchanged in 1977-1978 to the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia, countries with established records of serious human rights violations; and the cuts to other gross violators on the U.S. taxpayers’ dole have not only involved small amounts, they have also been compromised by continuing deliveries based on unexpended credits from the past and the sanctioning of private sales. Huge arms sales have been approved for Iran, and some small arms and training for the Iranian secret police are included in the fiscal 1979 Carter budget, despite flagrant human rights violations. The upheavals in Iran in the fall of 1978, as we have already noted, led to no slackening of support. On the contrary, President Carter even went out of his way to communicate personally, and repeatedly, his warm backing for the Shah who was offered new supplies to help him quell any opposition or objections to his subfascist priorities.⁸⁸ Morocco, engaged in a counterinsurgency war in the Western Sahara of doubtful legality and gross incompatibility with human rights, has also received substantial military credits and training grants, and U.S. corporations linked to the Pentagon are reportedly helping to install a modern electronic sensing system that will

improve Moroccan efficiency in violating human rights.⁸⁹ The Human Rights Administration has followed its predecessor in providing Indonesia with the military supplies it desperately needs to pursue its war of annihilation in East Timor. The vast flow of armaments to Saudi Arabia and Israel proceeds with utter lack of concern for the human rights policies of the tiny Saudi Arabian elite or of the Israeli military occupation. The Carter Administration is also hoping to realize the long-term aim of U.S. policy to remove Egypt from the Middle East, where it has posed a threat to U.S. interests in the oil-producing states, and turn it towards Africa, one of the major aims of Camp David. Correspondingly, Egypt too is being armed, not out of a devotion to human rights, but for the “new mission” which “is well known to almost everybody: an army of African intervention.”⁹⁰

Argentina, rated by Amnesty International as one of the world’s premier violators of human rights, with death squads and torture teams still on a rampage,⁹¹ has been an important test of administration human rights policy. Military assistance and sales to Argentina were terminated on September 30, 1978 by congressional action, and even before that the administration had refused to clear some requests for sales of arms and spare parts. Export-Import Bank financing of a major commercial loan to Argentina was denied, and the administration voted against (or abstained from voting on) quite a few loans up for action at the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. All military and training programs were not cut off, however,⁹² even after September 30, 1978. The flow of funds from both international and private U.S. institutions has increased without interference under the regime of terror. And there has been no interference with normal trade; such drastic action is reserved for serious crimes, such as Cuba’s expropriation of U.S. property. All of this suggests a less than maximum administration effort and/or structural obstacles to taking human rights seriously.

The Ex-Im Bank loan had been denied in the summer of 1978, over strong objections from the business community. The Bank chairman noted that he was obliged under law “to take into account the observance and respect for human rights in countries receiving exports we support with loans or financial guarantees.” By September, business pressure had reached such a level that the law was forgotten, and the State Department reversed its denial of the loan. “While no one pointed to human rights improvements as a reason for the reversal, a State Department spokesman said the administration had ‘expectations’ of improvement,” the *Washington Post* reports.⁹³ The same report cites regular military sales to Argentina and approval of training slots for Argentine officers at U.S. military

installations. These were described by U.S. ambassador to Argentina Raul Castro “as evidence of the new incentives policy,” which is replacing the Carter “policy of imposing largely ineffective and often counterproductive sanctions against the junta in favor of incentives to encourage human rights improvements.” As if to highlight the effectiveness of these “incentives,” the *Post* on the same day reports an account of torture by a political prisoner in Argentina who was never charged with any crime through his 12 months of captivity and 11 days of torture, adding that the transcript of his conversation with Western diplomats recounting the details of his torture “is known to be in the possession of the U.S. government.”⁹⁴ The same report points out that his “experience is not atypical. Although somewhat improved over the last year, Argentina still ranks among the world’s leading human rights offenders.” That will all change, no doubt, now that the Human Rights Administration is shifting from ineffective and counterproductive sanctions to a new incentives policy.

In brief, the clients that we nurtured and supported through past years of human rights deterioration find that human rights will continue to be at best a side issue in U.S. policy. Even the verbal spankings will be light, and in the case of clients with money and power, such as Iran, our leaders will join hands with theirs in expressions of common devotion to human rights.

There is no reason to be so restrained with Communism, however, where both our responsibility for human rights violations and our power to alleviate abuses are small; and our bold leaders can (and will be pressed to) speak out more forcefully. The result is that the Carter human rights campaign has had an impact on Soviet attitudes, but not those pertaining to human rights; rather, it has added to Soviet suspicions of U.S. interest in controlling the arms race. Carter’s mobilization of power in Congress has not been sufficient to prevent the conservative House from voting against aid to Cuba, Vietnam, Mozambique, and several other exclusively left-oriented states, while preserving it intact for subfascism. Thus, whatever Carter’s real intentions, his human rights movement thus far has worked out in practice to exacerbate cold war tensions and affect minimally human rights in areas under United States influence.

But while the new moralism is not likely to have a large impact on human rights, it may well be effective as an instrument of propaganda. After the horrors of Indochina, some dramatic initiatives were needed to reconstruct the image of U.S. benevolence that has proven so useful a cover for external intervention. With our concern for “human rights” reestablished, the United States will be able to return to the “activist” foreign policy that is

essential for preserving the global interests of U.S. capitalism. If human rights are violated in the process, ideologists will speak of unexplained “inconsistencies” and “deviations”.

Still, in spite of these basic considerations, there may be some marginal gains to human rights from the new propaganda offensive. The expressed concern for human rights may offer opportunities for people who are genuinely interested in the issue. They can exploit the new rhetoric, and should, to try to alleviate the suffering and oppression of the victims of terroristic states, and may even be able to enlist some support from political forces in the United States, when this is not unduly expensive. But it is hardly reasonable to expect that the recent discovery of human rights violations will offset the systematic factors that impel the United States to impose and support client fascism, factors based on powerful and compelling economic interests that have in no way been diminished by recent developments, domestic or international.

1.16 Individual Morality and Human Rights Policy

Several moral issues arise in protests concerning atrocities and violations of human rights. If the purpose of such protests is self-aggrandizement, service to one's state, establishing credentials with one's compatriots or deity, or other self-serving motives, then it is clear how to proceed; join the chorus of protests organized by the government or the media with regard to the iniquity of the current enemies of the state. Such protest may be directed towards genuine abuses of human rights, but it is at the moral level of protest for pay. We understand this very well in the case of official enemies. Suppose that some Russian intellectual condemns U.S. behavior in Chile or Vietnam. What he says may be quite true, but we do not admire his courage or moral integrity. Similar remarks apply here, and for the very same reasons.

Suppose that the purpose of protest is to relieve human suffering or defend human rights. Then more complex considerations arise. One must consider the plausible consequences for the victims of oppression. It is for this reason, for example, that an organization such as Amnesty International urges polite letters to the most miserable tyrant. In some cases, public protest may be positively harmful, a fact familiar to people seriously concerned with human rights. Recently Jiri Hajek, formerly foreign minister in the Dubcek government and now a leading Czech dissident, “criticized President Carter for an ‘over-tough’ approach which, he said, will hinder the struggle for greater political latitude in the East bloc.”⁹⁵ If the purpose of the “human rights crusade” is to restore U.S. prestige after the battering it has taken in the past decades, then such considerations are

irrelevant. In fact, Washington had already made its position clear on the matter: “The Carter Administration issued a pointed warning yesterday that it will not be dissuaded from its public campaign for human rights around the world [sic] by the harassment of individual dissidents in foreign countries.”⁹⁶ But people with a genuine concern for human rights would react quite differently, and give serious consideration to the likely effects on the victims. Such calculations are not always easy ones but the issue will not be lightly dismissed by people who engage in protest for other than self-serving or strategic motives.

Such persons will also consider how their finite energies can be distributed most efficaciously. It is a cheap and cynical evasion to plead that “we must raise our voices” whenever human rights are violated. Even a saint could not meet this demand. A serious person will try to concentrate protest efforts where they are most likely to ameliorate conditions for the victims of oppression. The emphasis should, in general, be close to home: on violations of human rights that have their roots in the policies of one’s own state, or its client regimes, or domestic economic institutions (as, e.g., in the case of U.S. investment in South Africa), and in general, on policies that protest may be able to influence. This consideration is particularly relevant in a democracy, where public opinion can sometimes be aroused if circumstances allow a sufficient breach in the conformism of the ideological institutions (the media and academic scholarship), but it applies as well in totalitarian states that rely in part on popular consent, as most do. It is for this reason that we honor a Medvedev or Grigorenko who denounce the crimes of the Russian state and its satellites, at great personal risk. If, as in these cases, they also condemn the criminal acts of the United States, that is well and good, but far less significant. In the case of Solzhenitsyn, who comes to the United States to call for a holy war against Communism and criticizes us for not resorting to still greater violence against our enemies, the most generous reaction must be pity—and distress at the fact that the Soviet state has reduced so many of its most courageous dissidents to such blindly destructive hostility.

For privileged Western intellectuals, the proper focus for their protest is at home. The primary responsibility of U.S. citizens concerned with human rights today is on the continuing crimes of the United States: the support for terror and oppression in large parts of the world, the refusal to offer reparations or aid to the recent victims of U.S. violence. Similar considerations apply elsewhere. French intellectuals may, if they choose, devote their energies to joining the chorus of protest against Cambodian atrocities that has been conducted by the international press (including the *New York Times*, the Soviet Press, indeed virtually every articulate segment of opinion in the industrial societies). As long as such protest is honest and accurate—often it is not, as we shall see—it is legitimate,

though further questions may be raised about its impact. This small increment to the international barrage on Cambodia had little if any effect in mitigating harsh practices there, though it had a powerful effect on ideological renewal in the West and helped prepare the ground for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in January 1979. These effects were predictable, and predicted. French intellectuals interested in doing something to alleviate suffering in Southeast Asia where their impact might be positive would have been better advised to expend their efforts in protesting the announcement by their government that it proposes to join in the glorious massacre in East Timor by supplying arms, setting up an arms industry and providing diplomatic cover for Indonesia.⁹⁷ If victims of oppression in Russia, Uganda, or Cambodia can be helped by public protest, then it is justified; otherwise, it is empty rhetoric, or worse. The ultimate vulgarity, perhaps, is the spectacle to which we are now being treated in the U.S. (indeed, Western) media, where many people who supported U.S. savagery in Indochina or perhaps finally turned against the war on “pragmatic grounds”—the United States could not reach its goals at reasonable cost—now feign outrage and indignation over oppressive or murderous acts that are in large part a consequence of the U.S. violence that they tolerated or supported. What they say may in fact be true—although it often is not—but it reeks of hypocrisy and opportunism. We would react no differently if some German intellectual who tolerated or supported Hitler expressed his indignation over the atrocities committed by the French resistance after liberation.

Even those who took part in protest or resistance against the U.S. war in Vietnam cannot escape these questions. Should they, for example, protest atrocities in Indochina in the pages of the *New York Times*, in a context of continuing distortions on atrocities (and on all facets of the war) and a very effective, ongoing official and media propaganda campaign, which has direct and very harmful consequences for the victims of U.S. barbarism in Indochina? Again, individuals seriously concerned with human rights and human dignity will carefully consider the potential human consequences of their acts. Will particular forms of protest help to alleviate the condition of those who suffer, including victims of earlier violence? Or will they contribute to rebuilding the ideological foundations for new violence and depredations? The future victims of counterrevolutionary violence will not thank even honest protestors who thoughtlessly contribute to these ends. These questions are not easy to answer and honest people may reach differing conclusions concerning them, but they deserve serious thought, far more than has been publicly expressed during the postwar period of ideological reconstruction.

The Pentagon-CIA Archipelago

The Vietnam War has been digested by the U.S. political system with hardly a trace. Essentially the same people manage national affairs, and possess virtually exclusive access to the mass media; the critics of the war have lapsed, or been forced, into silence; and the media have not allowed the vast accumulation of sordid details about our Vietnam involvement to disturb the myth of U.S. benevolence and concerned pursuit of democracy abroad. This myth has remained unruffled even in the face of the accelerating “Brazilianization”¹ of the Third World over the past several decades, very often under active U.S. sponsorship, with frequent displacement of democratic governments and extensive and growing resort to repression, including physical torture, imprisonment, death squads, and mysterious “disappearances,” all within the U.S. sphere of influence.

At the end of World War II, if some prescient commentator had described the terror regimes that now dominate Latin America, liberals would have derided this visionary for spelling out the likely consequences of a Nazi victory. Such liberal critics would have been right, although liberalism has accommodated well (and has contributed much²) to the institutionalization of subfascism under U.S. tutelage. In this context, the state which has sponsored and supported the Somoza family, the Shah, Marcos, Park, Pinochet, Suharto, Mobutu, the Brazilian generals, and their many confederates in repression and violence, can announce a campaign for human rights throughout the world and be taken with the utmost seriousness.

2.1 Neo-Colonialism and the Washington Connection

Since World War II there has been a steady deterioration of political and social conditions in Latin America and generally throughout Third World areas that are within the Free World. Liberal ideologists treat this as fortuitous and independent of U.S. choice and power, claiming that as a democracy we support democratic institutions abroad, while any contrary trends are based on exogenous forces over which the United States has no control. In the process it is necessary to suppress and belittle the long-standing relations between the U.S. political-military elite and the military juntas and comprador elements in such states as Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, the economic advantages of Third World fascism to U.S. economic interests, and the evidence of positive U.S. political and economic support for brutal dictatorships and frequent hostility to reform as well as radical change in the Third World.

2.1.1 The Systematic Positive Relationship Between U.S. Aid and Human Rights Violations

The *real* relationships, as opposed to the standard ideological expressions of devotion to democracy and humanism, are indicated on the accompanying table, which relates U.S. economic and military aid (and that of U.S. dominated international lending agencies) to various political and human rights and economic factors. The table focuses on a series of strategic changes, whose dates are shown in column 1, for 10 U.S. client countries. Columns 2-4 describe the effect of these events on the political environment and human rights, with minus signs (-) indicating an adverse effect on human rights, i.e., a decline in democratic institutions and an increased use of torture and larger numbers of political prisoners—and positive signs (+), the reverse. Column 5 shows the effect of these events on the “climate of investment”: 5a shows + if tax and profit repatriation laws were eased; 5b is + if government controls were put on wages or independent labor organizations were weakened or destroyed. Columns 6-10 show percentage changes in aid and credits from the United States and international organizations for the two or three years after the political change as compared with the comparable period prior to the events.³ For example, under Brazil, 1964 is a strategic date as noted in column 1. We can see that human rights deteriorated, investment climate improved, and overall aid and credits by the U.S. and multinational lending organizations went up 112% (column 10) in the three years following the coup as compared to the three years preceding the coup.

There are a number of problems associated with this table.⁴ Trends in torture and numbers of political prisoners are not easy to establish, and in a few instances the evidence is tentative. Aid figures can also be misleading, as other factors may temporarily distort a real relationship; e.g., the decline in aid to South Korea after the Park coup of 1972 was greatly influenced by the withdrawal of South Korean mercenaries from South Vietnam and the resultant decline in U.S. payments for these hired soldiers.⁵ The reduction in military aid to Chile after the fascist coup of 1973 is also misleading, since the high rate of military aid under Allende reflected U.S. support for the right-wing military in the interests of counter-revolution—economic aid to the civil society declined precipitously under Allende. The collapse of international organization aid to Chile during the Allende period, and its rapid recovery under subfascism, reflects the dominance of U.S. economic and political interests in the decision-making processes of the international agencies.⁶

For all its limitations this table bears out in graphic form a set of relationships that should be obvious to any student of recent Third World history. For most of the sample

countries, *U.S.-controlled aid has been positively related to investment climate and inversely related to the maintenance of a democratic order and human rights*. Only in the case of South Korea and Thailand is the pattern reversed. The South Korean exception we have explained above. The row for Thailand shows a sharp reduction of U.S. economic and military aid following the moves toward democratic government in October 1973, slightly more than offset by U.S. international organization credits. But the bulk of the credits consisted of a large World Bank loan made in 1974 while control by the Thai elite was still intact. In 1975 World Bank loans fell to zero for the first time in a decade. It should also be noted that there was a large influx of U.S. military aid into Thailand in 1976 (not shown on the table), which no doubt facilitated the counterrevolutionary coup of October, 1976. (See chapter 4, section 2.)

Each of the 10 countries shown on Table 1 was a major violator of human rights during the past decade, but each received military and economic aid and police training assistance from the United States in the 1970s. For a slightly different group of 10 Free World violators of human rights,⁷ Table 2 shows for the 5 year period 1973-1978 that the 10 received total economic aid from the United States of over \$2 billion along with military aid and credit of \$2.3 billion, they were sold arms in excess of \$18 billion, and they had 12,723 officer trainees at schools in the United States or in U.S. bases abroad. The table also shows that 7 of the 10 violators were proposed recipients of military grants and credits in the Carter “human rights” budget for fiscal 1978. The author of Table 2, Michael Klare, concludes that

rather than standing in detached judgment over the spread of repression abroad, the United States stands at *the supply end of a pipeline of repressive technology* extending to many of the world’s authoritarian governments. And despite everything this administration has said about human rights, there is no evidence that this pipeline is being dismantled. In fact, its relative durability suggests that the delivery of repressive technology to authoritarian regimes abroad is a consistent and *intentional* product of our foreign policy, rather than a peripheral or accidental one.⁸

2.1.2 U.S. Military and Police Aid and Training and the Spread of Fascism

Military training and supply, the build-up and cultivation of the military and intelligence establishments, as well as CIA surveillance and destabilization, have been key elements of the “Washington connection,” employed to protect U.S. interests in its client states in the post-World War II era. The United States trains client military personnel in some 150 bases and training schools, and sends mobile units and advisors to serve on an in-country basis. This training has placed great weight on ideological conditioning and has “steeped young Latin officers in the early 1950s anti-Communist dogma that subversive infiltrators

could be anywhere.”⁹ In addition to the ideological cement of this world view, U.S. military training has purposefully helped build a network of personal relationships between United States and Latin American military cadres.¹⁰ This tie has been further consolidated by military aid from the wealthier power as well as cooperative maneuvers and logistical planning. Over 200,000 Latin American military personnel have been trained in the U.S., and since 1949 over 35,000 Latin American officers have trained in the School for the Americas alone; a school identified in Latin America by its historic function as the “school of coups.”¹¹

In testimony before Congress, there has been a pretense by spokesmen for the military and foreign policy establishment that our training and contacts will have a “pro-democratic” impact and will serve to bring more “humane” methods to the Latin American police and military. Precisely the opposite effects have occurred. Our training and aid have enhanced the power of the military, and our ideological and moral support and training have encouraged them to assert themselves politically. They have become more “pro-American,” but any spinoff of democratic values is as yet undetectable.¹² In the Brazilian coup, the U.S.-trained faction took the lead in overturning constitutional government, and throughout Latin America graduates of U.S. military training—including Pinochet and Leigh of Chile, Geisel of Brazil, Massera of Argentina, and scores of others—have led the march to subfascism. Furthermore, *inhumane* methods of interrogation and general treatment of prisoners have grown steadily, in parallel with the increase in U.S. training and supply of modern tools of repression. The Amnesty International *Report on Torture* pointed out that today “much of state torture is carried out by the military forces, usually elite or special units, who displace the civil police in matters of political security. Their military training and their post-World War II theories about ‘unconventional war’ make them particularly apt for the practice and enable them to apply the concept of ‘war’ to any situation of civil political conflict no matter how mild.”¹³

From Brazil, and with continuing U.S. assistance, torture spread throughout much of Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, with Brazil serving as a torture-aid subcontractor. Jean-Pierre Clavel states that

secret steps were taken in Brazil in the early 1960s by a group of senior military and police officials to create a coordinated autonomous torture and “death squad” network to crush political opposition. To train personnel, illustrated lectures and live demonstrations of torture were conducted, using political prisoners as guinea pigs, by *Operacao Bandeirantes*, once described as “a type of advanced school of torture.” Subsequently, trained Brazilian torturers traveled to military academies in neighboring nations to conduct courses in what is euphemistically called “interrogation”.¹⁴

Clavel notes that “refinements” have continued, based on programs of technical and

medical research designed to develop techniques for intensifying pain without causing death. He quotes Dr. Timothy Shallice of London National Hospital: “Torture which was once a craft has become a technology.”

Brazil is apparently not the only subcontractor for torture-aid. In a series of reports from Iran, Richard Sale commented that “innumerable Iranians, including many in a position to know, told me that the Israelis oversee SAVAK’s techniques,” which have been reported by Amnesty International and others in gruesome detail.¹⁵

The creativity of U.S. specialists in this area has been impressive. A Vietnamese prisoner in South Vietnam remembered a visit by U.S. prison experts: “Usually we were chained in a kind of ordinary shackle in the form of a number 8, where the legs and hands go through the two holes of the number 8. Then, one day, three Americans came and inspected the shackles and chains...A couple of days later, the number 8 cuffs were replaced...[With the new ones] whenever the prisoners tried to move their legs, the fetters would lock further and further one step and yet another step through them.”¹⁶ During the Vietnam War the United States supplied funds and technology for Tiger Cages, interrogation centers, and electronic and other equipment used for torture, and at a very minimum the United States gave its moral sanction for the huge expansion of torture as a standard practice. SAVAK, the Iranian secret police noted for its sadism and frequent use of torture, was set up by the CIA in 1957, and the military officers who ran it from its inception “received special training at the Marine base in Quantico, Va., and attended orientation programs at C.I.A. headquarters at Langley, Va. More SAVAK agents received U.S. training under police programs financed by the Agency for International Development, which spent more than \$2 million on ‘public safety’.”¹⁷ Jan Black notes that in Brazil “the marked expansion of the [police] training program also coincided with an increase in documented reports of the systematic torture of political prisoners and of the murders of petty criminals, as well as alleged subversives, carried out by the ‘Death Squads,’ reportedly composed of off-duty policemen.”¹⁸

There is considerable evidence that U.S. military and intelligence services have provided training in torture to Third World police and military,¹⁹ but this is of small consequence given the established fact of moral support, massive supply of torture technology, and the widespread adoption of torture as an administrative practice by client fascist states so supplied and protected by the United States. The Amnesty International *Report on Torture* provides an excellent case study of the history of torture under the Colonel’s regime in Greece, 1967-73, noting that “American policy on the torture question

as expressed in official statements and official testimony has been to deny it where possible and minimise it, where denial was not possible. This policy flowed naturally from general support for the military regime.”²⁰ This generalization could be applied to the *system* of torture regimes, as we will show in many cases below, and it tells us a great deal about the ultimate source of this “cancerous growth.”

2.1.3 The Scope and Variety of CIA Subversive Activities

CIA destabilization operations have assumed many forms, of which only a few will be mentioned briefly here. First is the outright murder of political leaders like Lumumba (to be replaced by the more amenable Mobutu), or General Schneider in Chile,²¹ and the numerous attempts on the life of Castro.²² Second, and also familiar, are the direct conspiracies with terrorists, mercenaries or (usually) military factions within a country to disrupt or overthrow a government in disfavor. Among the more conspicuous and acknowledged successes with heavy CIA involvement have been the Belgian Congo, Chile, Greece, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Iran; among the failures, the abortive 1958 rebellion in Indonesia and the Bay of Pigs fiasco of 1961. In the case of Laos, the CIA actually organized and directed a mercenary army of hill tribesmen in an effort to destroy the indigenous social revolution, cynically abandoning its protégés when they were largely decimated and no longer needed.²³ In this general category, we may also note such activities as terrorist attacks, crop-poisoning, etc., as practiced extensively by the CIA under Kennedy and subsequent administrations in an effort to undermine the Cuban regime and disrupt Cuban economic development.²⁴ The total number of cases of CIA involvement in active subversion of established governments (and attempts at political murder) runs into the hundreds or even thousands. Third is political bribery and the funding of foreign politicians. In the case of Brazil, the inflow of CIA money in the pre-1964 period was so huge, involving so many hundreds of politicians, that it provoked a scandal and a government investigation, which was conveniently terminated by the 1964 coup.

Fourth is propaganda, which can take a wide variety of forms, but is invariably undercover (and thus dishonest as to its source) and is often carried out by subsidies to researchers, research institutes, publishers, and journalists. It can be massive in scale and scope, as in pre-coup Brazil, where in 1962 the CIA mounted a “saturation campaign,” with 80 weekly radio programs, 300 additional hours of radio-TV advertising, a flooding of the press with canned editorials and “information,” large quantities of billboard ads and pamphlets, etc. It kept “dozens” of journalists on its payroll and edited a monthly

magazine, using top quality paper and free distribution. It even rented the editorial page of Rio's evening paper, *A Noite*. And it subsidized the publication of numerous conservative books, "distributed free and without attribution."²⁵

In its propaganda campaigns the CIA has long engaged in forgeries designed to discredit its enemies. In Brazil, for example, in order to undercut the position of a peasant leader threatening reform, the CIA printed leaflets announcing his presence at nonexistent meetings, and printed Marxist literature to be distributed after the coup to prove the existence of a Communist threat.²⁶ In Chile, the CIA forged and disseminated documents in 1973 to prove that the Communists intended a bloody coup, featuring the beheading of the top echelons of the military, in part to frighten and provoke the military into pushing ahead with their own takeover and massacre.²⁷

A fifth type of CIA destabilization operation is the organization and funding of demonstrations, important in the subversion process in both Brazil and Chile. Philip Agee noted in his *Diary* that "the Rio station and its larger bases were financing the mass urban demonstrations against the Goulart government, proving the old themes of God, country, family, and liberty to be as effective as ever."²⁸ The same tactic was employed in Chile as part of the CIA subversion program. A sixth CIA tactic is the infiltration of unfavored organizations and political parties. This has informational value and it allows confusion to be sown and agent provocateurs to function. In Brazil, the most important effort of this sort was implemented in collaboration with the AFL-CIO through the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which carried out an anti-Communist propaganda campaign, worked diligently to split and discredit any independent Brazilian unions, and in the end proudly supported the coup that definitively ended free unionism in Brazil.²⁹

Finally, the CIA collects information, which is used in various ways. Most interesting is the extent to which it regularly provides information to rightist thugs and conspirators against constitutional government. The Chilean military were given lists of "enemies" and the Brazilian right was constantly fed information prior to the coup.³⁰ The political orientation and role of the CIA are such that no clandestine agents were stationed in South Africa before 1974, while both before and after 1974 the CIA has had a close and "cordial" relationship with the South African secret police.³¹ CIA destabilization of inconvenient democracies has been commonplace, but it takes a vivid imagination to conceive of them subverting South Africa in the interests of ending apartheid.

Attention is focused above on Brazil precisely because it is such a large and relatively powerful country.³² In spite of this the CIA was able to bribe its journalists, subsidize its

politicians, conspire with military factions, infiltrate and subvert the labor movement, and engage in extensive propaganda campaigns—in short, it could virtually disregard the sovereignty of this large and theoretically independent country. The catch, of course, is that Brazil was *not* an independent country—U.S. penetration was already enormous by the 1960s and U.S. leaders acted as if they had a veto over Brazilian economic and foreign policy.³³ The Brazilian military and much of its economy were already “denationalized,” with strong ties and dependency relations to the United States; and U.S. business had a substantial presence in Brazil, controlling, among other things, about half of the advertising industry and a rapidly expanding and significant fraction of the mass media.³⁴ It was hard to separate U.S. business and CIA activities in Brazil before 1964. Levinson and de Onis claim that U.S. business, in close touch with the CIA, helped organize and finance anti-Goulart demonstrations in the early 1960s,³⁵ and Richard Helms himself reported that business served regularly as a CIA cover.³⁶ Hanna Mining not only funded anti-Communist conferences, but made a more direct defense of freedom by providing trucks for the Minas Gerais troops that launched the “revolution.”³⁷

A curious aspect of this massive subversion operation in a country such as Brazil is that it is not regarded as subversion. If the Cubans are found to provide weapons to insurgents in Venezuela such a discovery is given great publicity as evidence of Cuban perfidy³⁸—*this* piddling and one dimensional effort is subversion. The subversion of Brazil by the United States in the years leading up to the coup of 1964—weapons on a huge scale, bribery, black propaganda, practically open conspiracy with military officers, massive institutional subversion—this multi-dimensional effort is the natural right of power—where domination is so taken for granted that the hegemonic power intervenes by inevitable and unquestioned authority. We are benevolently protecting our children in their own interest—can parents be considered alien to their children or conspire against them? Can the cat looking after its 20 mice have any interest antagonistic to theirs?

2.1.4 The Pre-Eminence of Favorable Investment Climate

The pattern in the exercise of power by the cat among the mice is clear, persistent, rational, and ugly. Human rights have tended to stand in the way of the satisfactory pursuit of U.S. economic interests—and they have, accordingly, been brushed aside, systematically. U.S. economic interests in the Third World have dictated a policy of containing revolution, preserving an open door for U.S. investment, and assuring favorable conditions of investment. Reformist efforts to improve the lot of the poor and oppressed, including the encouragement of independent trade unions, are not conducive to

a favorable climate of investment. Democracy is clearly not conducive to a favorable business climate. As noted by Edward A. Jessor, Jr., chairman of the United Jersey Banks, in a speech to the American Bankers Association: “Quick and tough decisions can be made in a relatively short time in a country such as Brazil compared to the difficulty there is in reaching agreement on what actions to take in a democracy.”³⁹ So much for democracy. Democratic threats to the interests of foreign investors, such as a Philippines Supreme Court ruling prior to the 1972 coup prohibiting foreigners from owning land, or a Brazilian dispute over a mineral concession to Hanna Mining Company, or agrarian reform in Guatemala, or nationalization of oil in Iran, are expeditiously resolved in favor of the foreigner by dictators and military juntas. Marcos, for example, quickly reversed the land ownership decision and, “According to one oilman, ‘Marcos says “We’ll pass the laws you need—just tell us what you want”.’”⁴⁰ (This is a nice illustration of how, under client fascism, the constituency of the leadership shifts to foreign interests.) This case exemplifies what has been a consistent pattern.

2.1.5 The Economic Role of Terror: Preserving and Enlarging Military, Comprador and Foreign Income Shares

We have seen that there is a positive relationship between U.S. aid, investment climate, and terror. A grim further fact is that the terror is not a fortuitous spinoff but *has a functional relationship to investment climate*. Special tax privileges to foreign business and dependence on foreign investment for economic growth are not easy to achieve under a democratic order in this era of Third World nationalism. Neither are wage controls and other actions conducive to a favorable investment climate. These actions have involved the deliberate “marginalization” of over 80% of the population by their total exclusion from political processes, from legal and broader “human rights,” and from the policy calculations of the elite leadership.⁴¹ The necessary linkage between terror and economic policy has been expressed time and again by spokesmen for the Catholic Church in Latin America, for whom the connection is a part of daily experience:

The situation provoked by the chosen model of development is such that it in effect provokes a revolution that did not exist. In order to impose the model of development which gives privilege to small minorities, it was necessary to create or maintain a repressive State which in turn provokes a situation of civil war. The very theoreticians of the system insist on the necessary link between development and security; they recognize that the development they wish to impose on the country can only provoke indignation among the people...If there were any type of freedom left, the cries of protest would be so great that the only solution has been to impose absolute silence.⁴²

In short, the “new order” in the U.S. colonial sphere is blatant and violent class warfare, with the combined interests of the denationalized military leadership, some local

business, and multinational enterprise (with its foreign state adjuncts) literally seizing the state to accomplish their objectives, shattering the organizational defenses of the majority of the population, and striving to reduce it to passivity, clearing the decks for subfascist economic policy and “development”.

The economics of subfascism involves a rapid shift to a wide open door to foreign trade and investment, tight money, and social welfare budget cuts—that is, the economic policies called for by the interests of the dominant power and its institutional affiliates, the IMF and World Bank. Priority is given to servicing the foreign debt via increased exports and decreased imports, with the burden falling largely on the underlying population in the form of reduced wages and serious unemployment. There is a return to the “free market,” in theory, but it is selectively applied, with no serious control over monopoly power, employer organizations and collective action, but with control over wages, both directly and by means of a banning of strikes and the destruction or state control of unions.

Deflationary policies and an open door tend to weaken domestic business and enhance the power of foreign companies that can borrow abroad at relatively low interest rates. Thus, foreign investment often takes the form of buying out “non-competitive” local businesses in an accelerated process of denationalization.⁴³ Takeovers are financed commonly with resources raised in the poorer country, either in local capital markets or through reinvested local earnings. A 1968 Brazilian Commission of Inquiry study—suppressed in Brazil—showed that over an extended time period 11 major multinationals had brought into Brazil only \$298.8 million in capital from the outside. They had reinvested \$693 million and remitted abroad \$744.5 million. The ratio of the surplus generated by these companies in Brazil to the capital they had brought in was 5 to 1.⁴⁴ Although the Brazilian state has become more active in economic affairs in the 1970s, the coup increased the dependence of that country on foreign capital, which controls some 50% of Brazilian manufacturing sales and 59 of the 100 largest manufacturing companies, dominating the motor vehicle, pharmaceutical, machinery, rubber, plastic, and other industries of strategic importance.⁴⁵ In Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the early client fascist years have been characterized by a massive displacement of smaller domestic firms by larger local, and, more importantly, foreign multinationals.

A persistent and crucial characteristic of neo-colonialism is the preservation of labor as a cheap commodity. In the Philippines, for example, real wages have declined sharply for both rural and urban workers, and in “an era of rising commodity prices, labor remains the cheap component...Manila remains one of the few capitals of the world where a taxi ride

from the airport to the center of the city costs less than a dollar with tip.”⁴⁶ Plantation labor in the Philippines in the mid-1970s was 10¢ an hour and in the industrial park of Bataan averaged 85¢ a day;⁴⁷ not enough for minimal nutrition, apart from other human necessities, but superb for keeping labor costs at attractive levels. The 1972 agricultural census of Brazil showed that 78% of the rural workers of Brazil earned less than 150 cruzeiros (about \$38) per month. This enormous and impoverished reserve army is kept unorganized by force, uneducated by neglect, and constantly replenished by state encouragement and subsidizing of rural agribusiness mechanization.⁴⁸ Still lower wages have been obtainable by the use of prison labor. In Colombia, for example, where the minimum wage in 1975 was \$1.33 per day, Container Corporation of America, B.F. Goodrich, and dozens of other companies have employed thousands of prisoners at still lower rates under programs put forward as “rehabilitation,” although 75% or more of the prisoners have never been tried, but are “caught up in the Colombian system of justice.”⁴⁹

Cheap labor is, of course, good for keeping down business expenses, but doesn’t it limit the scope of the market for goods to be sold? The answer is that neo-colonial economies are increasingly export-oriented, with a heavy emphasis on the export of raw materials, so that the mass of the population can be regarded by its leaders as merely a cost factor. In a famous 1973 statement signed by six Brazilian bishops, and widely discussed—outside of the United States—the role of exports is described as follows:

“We must export!” Many industrial and agricultural companies are formed for the purpose of export. They have credit, tax incentives and other advantages so that they can export.

Why? To earn money, to stabilize our balance of payments, etc. But could not the same objective be reached with an increase in the internal market? In Brazil, only five percent can buy what is produced. With credit, about 15% of the working class can purchase a little above their basic needs. The other 80% practically buy nothing other than what they need to keep them from dying. Why? Because the economy is not based on the people, but rather on a moneyed minority. Thus, the thing is to export.

They try to export everything they cannot sell here at home, that which the people cannot afford to buy. It is not only a matter of luxury goods. For example, we are exporting shoes; in 1974 and 1975 exports will account for one-third of our production of footwear. And here our people go barefoot, and will go barefoot! And meat exports? Is there too much meat on our tables? Exports guarantee financing and the profits of corporations pure and simple.⁵⁰

The perspective of the U.S. business community on marginalization, repression, and related matters, was illuminated in a 1976 Special Report by *Business Week* on “Reversal of Policy: Latin America Opens The Door To Foreign Investment Again.”⁵¹ The editors are positively ecstatic about these new developments. The report is studded with such terms as “pragmatic,” “realistic,” “stability,” “tough,” and “confidence”. The words “democracy” and “torture” do not appear in the Special Report, nor is there any discussion of trends in income distribution or the allocation of budgetary resources to arms, business

subsidies, and education and medical research. The word “repression” appears once, in the following context:

A unifying theme of Latin military governments is that they stand—or claim to stand—for social and economic progress, not just law and order. Faced with a choice, however, they are likely to postpone social improvement as a goal secondary to economic consolidation [sic: whatever this means] and political stability, imposed with varying degrees of repression.

A unifying theme is that the juntas “claim to stand” for social progress, but they may not get around to it in our time.

These muddled apologetics exhaust *Business Week*’s analysis of welfare, income distribution, and political trends in Latin America. *Business Week* is even quite pleased with Chile, “whose economy had been reduced to a shambles” by Allende—no mention of the CIA-ITT contribution. Fascist achievements “have been obscured by a deep recession and by the harsh austerity measures”—industrial output fell marginally under Allende, whereas the index went from 113 to 78 under the junta. Apologetics can hardly be more crass and incompetent. The important point, though, is that a magazine that represents “enlightened” U.S. business interests displays such unqualified enthusiasm for Third World fascism, based clearly on its favorable impact on U.S. business. Any adverse effects on the majority of the population are completely irrelevant.

There is also a convergence of economic and military-strategic interests in support of Third World fascism, as the military juntas in charge usually have a client relationship to the U.S. military establishment, are cooperative on U.S. bases, and specialize in the cleaning up of any subversives and protestors who challenge the satellite relationship. The military-strategic interest may have some small degree of autonomy of its own, but the size, role, and global spread of the U.S. military establishment cannot be explained with any degree of plausibility except as derivative from a global economic interest that is well understood by the strategists of “containment”.

In the light of the role of client fascism as a system of institutionalized class repression and warfare, it is little wonder that the income share of the top 5% of income receiving units in Brazil rose from 44% in 1960 to 50% in 1970, that the share of the poorest 80% fell from 35% to 27.5%, and that only the top 10% of the population increased its relative income share. The Gini coefficient, a widely used measure of income inequality, reached its highest national level ever recorded in Latin America in Brazil in 1970.⁵² According to *Business Week*, the *real* wages of the lowest 80% of the Brazilian population “have been steadily dropping since 1964—the year the generals took over—despite a tripling of the gross national product to \$80 billion.”⁵³ In 1971, 65% of Brazil’s economically active

population subsisted on a monthly income of \$60 or less; only 1% earned \$350 per month and over, but many of these earned \$5,000 a month or more. In entire provinces of Brazil the average income is under 10% of that of other provinces.⁵⁴ “Hunger in the Northeast has taken on the characteristics of an epidemic,” and undernourishment not only kills large numbers of infants and small children (half the children born in Northeast Brazil die before 5) but has contributed to an alarming rate of feeble-mindedness among those who remain.⁵⁵

Just as in Thieu’s South Vietnam, so in Brazil very high quality medical service is available in the larger cities for the upper 5% of income-receiving units, but negligible medical resources are available in the countryside. Vastly more resources are applied to the police than to medical research and facilities, although “Northeast Brazil, whose 35 million residents form the greatest concentration of poverty in Latin America, is a virtual human laboratory of third world ailments.”⁵⁶ The serious disease schistosomiasis is very widespread in Brazil, the fatal disorder chagas affects 500,000 people, 30,000 new cases of tuberculosis appear each year, and contagious diseases account for 22% of all deaths. Nonetheless the Ministry of Health’s share of the national budget fell from 4.29% in 1966 to 0.99% in 1974. On the other hand, the allocation for defense *tripled* in real terms between 1963 and 1973.⁵⁷

Clearly the new Brazil, so pleasing to *Business Week* and the U.S. business community, is not exactly a welfare state. The large majority of the population is a means, not an end—in the same class as pack animals, only more dangerous, needing regular doses of terror to “maintain stability.” Terror keeps the neo-colonial elites in power and the investment skies sunny. The victims are numerous, but can be disregarded because of their remoteness and passivity. If necessary we can blame them for their own laziness and excessive production of offspring.

In their study *Economic Growth and Social Equity in Developing Countries*, Irma Adelman and Cynthia Taft Morris state that “the results of our analyses came as a shock to us...we had shared the prevailing view among economists that economic growth was economically beneficial to most nations. We had also not greatly questioned the relevance today of the historical association of successful economic growth with the spread of parliamentary democracy. Our results proved to be at variance with our preconceptions.”⁵⁸ On the basis of an elaborate analysis of data for 43 less developed countries, they found that

the position of the poorest 60 percent typically worsens, both relatively and absolutely, when an initial spurt of

narrowly based dualistic growth is imposed on an agrarian subsistence economy...The gains of the top 5 percent are particularly great in very low income countries where a sharply dualistic structure is associated with political and economic domination by traditional or expatriate elites.⁵⁹

These elites “need” any growth dividend to meet a rising international consumption standard and the needs of the external constituency, so that with sufficient force at their command they and their allies may capture all surpluses and depress even further the real incomes of the masses (frequently via inflation in a context of police state control over money wages).

Adelman and Morris found sociopolitical factors to be of great importance in explaining cross-country differences in income distribution; in case after case, “the more firmly entrenched the expatriate financial, commercial and technical elites, the greater the concentration of income in the hands of the top 5 percent...;” and “broad-based economic growth provides a way to achieve redistribution only where accompanied by social and educational development as well as substantial broadening of political participation.”⁶⁰

In brief, then, income distribution has tended to worsen in the poor countries of the Free World because growth has generated wealth that has been used not to improve the condition of the masses but to serve the growing consumption needs of a neocolonial elite and the demands of foreign business and finance. The preservation of their position has required a costly diversion of resources into the military (the “insurance policy”) and a subordination of development and welfare needs to the consumption-oriented demands of U.S. open-door entrants and affluent domestic consumers. Suharto, Marcos, etc., all have in common institutionalized venality, terrorization of the masses, and service to the needs of “the expatriate financial, commercial, and technical elites” specified by Adelman and Morris as tied in closely with a worsening income distribution.

2.1.6 Counterrevolution and the “Shakedown” States

The military juntas and dictators sponsored and/or supported by the United States usually proclaim as one of their objectives the cleaning up of civilian and democratic “corruption”. But corruption is “built-in” to these regimes and is normally carried to new heights when they achieve power. The graft and amassing of huge fortunes by the leadership of the collaborating elites have been so widespread that we may refer to them as “shakedown states.” This is not new. In the case of Chiang Kai-shek’s “old China,” General Stilwell’s lengthy experience with the Kuomintang led him to the oft-expressed conclusion that they were simply “gangsters,” who believed (accurately it turned out) that they could “go on milking the United States for money and munitions by using the old gag about quitting if...not supported.”⁶¹ As Kolko remarks, “No serious account of China

during the period 1942-1945 differs on the proposition that the corruption and venality of the ruling elite was its sole consistent characteristic.”⁶² A study of \$43 million in U.S. savings certificates and bonds put up for sale in October 1943 showed that the bulk was in the hands of Kuomintang leaders: T.V. Soong held \$4.4 million; K.P. Chen, \$4.1 million; H.H. Kung \$1.4 million; and so forth.⁶³

In the case of South Vietnam, huge fortunes were being made by comprador elements even before the escalation of 1965 brought in really large resources capable of being stolen. General Khanh, leader of the South Vietnamese state by U.S. choice for a brief period in 1964-1965,⁶⁴ and an expatriate shortly thereafter, prided himself on his restraint in having built up an estate of only \$10 million prior to his exit.⁶⁵ A 1968 report of the Senate Subcommittee on refugees stated that

corruption pervades all aspects of Vietnamese life, and it is brazenly practiced...Government jobs are bought and paid for by people seeking a return on their investments. Police accept bribes. Officials and their wives run operations in the black market. AID funds and hospital supplies are diverted into private pockets...In the field of refugee care and in many other fields the [Thieu] Government of South Vietnam has been engaged in the systematic looting of its own people.⁶⁶

Strongly reminiscent of the Kuomintang were the daily reports in 1974-1975 of the pocketing by Cambodian and South Vietnamese officers of the pay of “phantom troops” or the rice rations of live refugees, and the stealing and smuggling of medicine, scrap metals, and military supplies. Even new jet fighter planes were converted into ready money by the Saigon corruption machine, a 1976 police raid uncovering in an illegal scrap metal depot the wings of at least 15 A-37 aircraft (large numbers of which were rushed to Saigon just prior to the cease-fire, at a cost to the U.S. taxpayer of \$500,000 per airplane). In 1974 there was also a sensational scandal involving the siphoning off into speculative hoards of 150,000 tons of fertilizer, another gift of the U.S. taxpayer, by a group of importers and officials, including Thieu’s brother-in-law, who sold it off later at high black-market prices.⁶⁷

The Philippines exhibit the same pattern. An early post-coup analysis in *Business Week*, in expressing skepticism on the likelihood that Marcos would stamp out corruption, noted that

the President and his close associates are hardly free from suspicion. Since taking office seven years ago as a man of relatively moderate wealth, Marcos has become one of the Philippines’ top ten taxpayers. In a country with its share of multimillionaires, that is not bad on his official salary of \$4,500 a year. It is also well known that Marcos has demanded that he and his associates in the government be cut in on the profits of local businesses.⁶⁸

Recent evidence indicates that the Marcos revolution against corruption has involved: (1) a transfer of wealth, by expropriation, from some old wealthy families, out of favor

with Marcos, to Marcos's family and friends; (2) the concentration of the flow of graft, undiminished in size, into the hands of a new elite; and (3) the more aggressive use of state power to reward favored individuals, to destroy others, and to protect favored looters.⁶⁹ Similar processes on a somewhat larger scale are discussed below in the case studies of Indonesia and Thailand. (See chapter 4.)

In the U.S. view, all of this is treated as a rule of "Asian nature." As pointed out by Donald Kirk, Far Eastern correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* "Kim [a South Korean poet] blames the suffering of his people in large part on the kind of bribery and chicanery that American officials smilingly dismiss as 'routine' in 'all Asian countries'—notably those allied with the United States."⁷⁰ Paul R. Strauss, a long-time U.S. financial correspondent in Asia, assures us that "what we fail to realize is that corruption is a way of life in Asia," and that what is bad is not graft but *unsystematic* graft (such as one finds in the Philippines, as compared with the *efficient* graft of South Korea).⁷¹ Actually, Strauss and U.S. officialdom are correct, insofar as the "Asian nature" familiar and relevant to Americans is of those willing to cooperate with the imperial powers in suppressing revolutionary nationalism and maintaining Free World control—what the Vietnamese called "country-selling" Asians. Peter Dale Scott quotes a Council on Foreign Relations document that refers to a certain Indonesian group as possessing "rare qualities of leadership," which, Scott observes, includes this special characteristic: "their recently-demonstrated willingness to plot with the CIA against a popularly elected and supported government."⁷² "Asian nature" and "rare qualities of leadership" are clearly often interchangeable expressions.

We therefore expect to find the same characteristics in "African nature" and "Middle Eastern nature." The Zaire regime of Mobutu has replicated the Asian scene with the human nature and "rare qualities of leadership" of Western choice. Michael Kaufman reports in the *New York Times* that

[Mobutu's] system of patronage and payoffs has created an extortionate culture evident at all levels of society that is becoming increasingly oppressive...The President is also said to have a huge fortune in Swiss banks and in residences abroad...What angers the Zairians more is the spread of this rapaciousness through every rank of the bureaucracy, particularly in the army.⁷³

This is the regime which the West put into power initially, and rushed frantically to preserve in power in 1978, with the aid of some traditional cold war demagoguery and fabrications.⁷⁴ Much of the loot carried away by the leaders of the Zaire shakedown state, as is so frequent throughout the U.S. empire, is a straight donation by imperial agents of funds provided by the U.S. taxpayer. One recently publicized episode was the \$1.4 million

given to Mobutu by the CIA for distribution to U.S.-supplied counterrevolutionary groups in Angola—Mobutu simply pocketed the money.⁷⁵

“Middle-Eastern human nature,” as manifested in the CIA-produced regime of the Shah of Iran, repeats the familiar pattern, although oil wealth has made possible greater high-mindedness at the top and a partial sloughing off of some of the cruder forms of graft. As in the Marcos case, the line between the interests of the state and the ruler is fuzzy. Expenditures of the imperial court of the Shah are provided for in the Iranian state budget, which in 1976 gave the Shah, among other incidentals, a discretionary fund of \$1 billion.⁷⁶ The Shah’s personal assets are not published, but the Pahlavi Foundation controlled by the Shah owns property estimated as worth about \$3 billion and direct family holdings of land, banks, insurance companies, hotels and industrial companies runs the family asset totals to unknown further large sums.⁷⁷ Graft has long been endemic to the Shah’s Iran, and in the 1950s there was a major scandal involving allegations of massive looting of U.S. aid money by the Shah himself.⁷⁸ The bribery revelations of recent years have pointed to the regular use of position by family and military insiders to “expedite” contracts, at a fee. There have been periodic anti-corruption campaigns in Iran, the renewal of which indicates the nature of their success. The effect of the vigorous anti-corruption campaign starting in 1974,⁷⁹ according to one foreign company official, “is that we now must pay to the people holding still higher positions in the country’s hierarchy.”⁸⁰ In 1978 the Shah announced that members of the Royal family would no longer be allowed to accept commissions and serve as intermediaries in contracting, suggesting that the family members, large numbers of them millionaires, are so conditioned as to find it difficult to keep their hands out of the till.⁸¹ The popular uprising of late 1978 led to new promises that now there would be reform.

There are several compelling reasons for the pervasiveness of graft under client fascism. One of the most crucial is the power and nature of the interests of the support base: a privileged local elite and a usually even more powerful foreign establishment. These interests expect rewards for their support (or that of their government), and they have the power to exact their toll. Hanna Mining, in dispute with the democratic governments of Brazil from 1956-1964 over mineral rights claims, was able to settle immediately after the coup on its own terms, gaining in addition exclusive harbor rights and other special privileges.⁸² In fact, every subversive overthrow of reformist and democratic governments in the U.S. sphere has been quickly followed by tax, profit-repatriation, and mineral claims “adjustments” that reflect a reestablishment of hegemonic

authority and special privileges for U.S. corporate interests.⁸³

A second and related factor in graft is the quality and ideology of the leadership of the various military juntas and dictatorships. Under U.S. auspices, the native leadership consists of elite military and comprador elements who, in meeting U.S. criteria, will hardly possess any independent social vision relevant to their own country or any basis or capacity to mobilize large numbers of their compatriots.

As Malcolm Browne wrote about “our” Vietnamese in the early 1960s:

Some military officials, especially those who served in the Viet Minh in the war against the French and later switched to Diem, are excellent officials by any standards. But they are exceptions. Unfortunately, most of the really intelligent, dedicated and patriotic men and women who form the stuff of sound leadership stayed with the Viet Minh.⁸⁴

In the 1970s the same situation holds for the general run of Free World junta leaders, drawn from the same elite groups as Diem and Thieu, standing in the same relation to their own population and an external power, and performing the same functions. Nonmilitary dictators like Marcos tend to be crass and self-serving opportunists. The military leaders of the Third World who have allowed themselves to be mobilized for the crusade against “communism” (i.e., change threatening any reduction in privilege),⁸⁵ have tended to be fanatical and naive, as well as opportunistic, not a healthy or inspiring combination. In brief, the support base of privilege and the entire network of arrangements, including the selection of leaders *qualified to do the work to be done*, makes corruption integral to the system.

A general cynicism soon pervades the privileged in a shakedown state, as it is observed that the leadership is feathering its own nest, that the foreigner has special rights not available to the ordinary member of the club,⁸⁶ and that privilege is arbitrarily structured within the local elite. Thus graft tends to spread horizontally and vertically among the military and other bureaucratic and elite members; and in the shakedown state, “the government man [when questioned about his right to demand a bribe in a “Latin American customer nation”] points to his own pocket and says *that* is the true resting place of the court of inquiry.”⁸⁷ This flows naturally from control by denationalized elites in a system of suspended law and arbitrary privilege. Those members of the elite who, awakening to their role, develop qualms about graft, denationalization, and forcible repression, may find themselves cast in the role of subversives themselves and treated accordingly.⁸⁸ The system of corruption has its own internal protections since democrats and reformers who oppose corruption and sympathize with the poor are a “security threat” and can be appropriately terminated as part of a system of preventive countersubversion, with the

assistance of the CIA, U.S. police advisory groups, and the appropriate communications and torture technology.

2.2 Brainwashing Under Freedom

Despite the clear link between U.S. sponsorship and support, on the one hand, and the use of terror and serious human rights violations, on the other, the nature and importance of the “Washington connection” are generally ignored in the West and the United States is regarded as in the vanguard of the defense of human rights. To some extent this faith rests on the facile—and still widely prevalent—assumption that external misbehavior is closely related to internal repression and limitations on freedom of dissent. As should be obvious from the most cursory examination of history, however, internal freedom is quite compatible with exploitative and inhumane external conduct extending over many decades.⁸⁹ Even in the fountainhead of Western democracy, ancient Athens, the development of a military establishment (a naval fleet) “made Athens securely democratic and incurably aggressive...Moreover, the aggressiveness of the Athenian polis was enhanced when rowers’ pay and plunder became, for a surprisingly large proportion of the Athenian citizenry, a necessary or at least highly desirable addition to the family resources. Against this background, Athens’ ruthless and incessant naval enterprise, which kept the entire Greek world in turmoil from 480 to 404 B.C., becomes intelligible.”⁹⁰ The cruel plundering of India, China, the East Indies, and Africa by the relatively liberal and open societies of Western Europe from the 17th well into the 20th centuries also shows that internal freedom and long-term external viciousness are entirely compatible.

More important, however, the neglect of the scope and significance of the “Washington connection” is a testimonial to the greatly underrated capacities of what we may call “brainwashing under freedom.” The ability of the system—that is to say, the important power factions in the system and their intellectual and media spokesmen—to reconstruct and shape the perspectives of history and the interpretation of current events in accordance with its own interest is truly impressive.

Just as slavery and institutionalized racism could be rationalized and reconciled with the idea of the United States as the land of liberty and equality of opportunity (mainly by *not looking*), so the “Washington connection” with spreading Third World terror can be reconciled with a United States keen on “human rights” by a suitable combination of diversion, prevarication, and refusal to contemplate. To achieve this result without explicit government censorship is the genius of the Western way.

The background against which human rights issues have arisen in the period since 1945 includes an unparalleled, worldwide economic expansion by the United States, its establishment of a global military presence with a peak of over 3,000 foreign military bases “virtually surrounding both the Soviet Union and Communist China,”⁹¹ and interventions in the affairs of other states that are unmatched in number, scale, violence, and global reach. In the face of these developments, the myth has been successfully established in the public mind, and in liberal circles in Western Europe, that the United States is just “containing” other “expansionist” powers! During the early phases of the Vietnam War, by a blatant misrepresentation of Lin Biao’s call for “peoples’ war”—suppressing his reiterated statement of the need “to adhere to a policy of self-reliance...on the strength of the masses in one’s own country”—and by a general propaganda barrage, the *Chinese* were established by the mass media as “expansionist,” while the United States, engaged in the wholesale destruction of a distant small country on the border of China, with bases around China, and supporting Chiang and Taiwan, was *responding* to China’s aggressiveness,⁹² preventing dominoes from falling, protecting freedom, etc. Rarely was the United States portrayed in the mass media or mainstream academic scholarship as engaged in the positive pursuit of its own economic-imperial interests at the expense of any people standing in its way; nor are its exploits described as subversion or outright aggression.

The hypocrisy and sheer silliness of much political commentary in this regard is truly remarkable. At the outer limits of absurdity, we find the *Wall Street Journal* deriding the “simple-minded myths” that “the problems in Indochina stem from things like American imperialism and its military-industrial complex” (editorial, 31 August 1978). Such phrases as “American imperialism,” ordinarily under a strict taboo, are occasionally permitted in such contexts as these. Readers are carefully protected from exposure to any serious discussion of the concept that arouses such horror. We were in Indochina not because of any U.S. material interests motivating a “forward” foreign policy, but as a matter of higher principle, exactly as when we aid and support Stroessner in Paraguay or the Shah in Iran. And it goes without saying that U.S. military exploits or “social engineering” programs in Indochina could hardly be responsible for any current problems.

To cite another example, William V. Shannon, liberal commentator for the *New York Times* and later President Carter’s ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, laments the failure of U.S. policy in these terms (28 September 1974):

For a quarter century, the United States has been trying to do good, encourage political liberty, and promote social justice in the Third World. But in Latin America where we have traditionally been a friend and protector

and in Asia where we have made the most painful sacrifices of our young men and our wealth, our relationships have mostly proved to be a recurring source of sorrow, waste and tragedy.

Even in Chile, he explains, our “benevolence, intelligence, and hard work have proved not to be enough,” as we intervened “with the best of motives.” We will be trapped in “ironic paradoxes” if we persist in our noble crusade to “advance our moral ideals” throughout the world.

As these examples illustrate, self-deception can reach quite extraordinary heights. Suppose that Fidel Castro had organized or participated in at least eight assassination attempts against the various presidents of the United States since 1959. It is safe to conclude that the *New York Times*, CBS News, and the mass media in general would have portrayed him as an international gangster and assassin, who must be excluded from the community of civilized nations. But when it is revealed that the United States has made or participated in that many attempts on Castro’s life,⁹³ it’s just “one of those things that governments do.” The press will hardly suggest on the basis of such information that the world’s “nations have to evaluate the U.S. potentiality as a responsible world citizen,” to paraphrase a *Christian Science Monitor* editorial that had the gall to assert that the United States after the record of the past 30 years, is entitled to stand in judgment over Vietnam for its alleged violations of human rights!

Suppose further that Fidel Castro had arranged for his agents in the United States to disperse various disease carriers in agricultural regions in an attempt to poison and destroy livestock and crops. Can one imagine the hysteria of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Times* on the depths to which barbarian evil can sink under Communism? The United States actually did carry out such acts against Cuba, reported in the press in early 1977 as minor news items—500,000 pigs had to be destroyed in Cuba as a result of a deliberately spread viral disease. And according to a recent statement of a Canadian adviser to the Cuban government, as early as 1962 he was paid \$5,000 by a Defense Intelligence Agency representative to infect Cuban poultry with a viral disease.⁹⁴ Editorial outrage has been modest, to say the least.

President Carter has kindly offered to move toward normalizing relations with Cuba, but under conditions that are worth presenting in his own words:

If I can be convinced that Cuba wants to remove their aggravating influence from other countries in this hemisphere, will not participate in violence in nations across the oceans, will recommit [sic] the former relationship that existed in Cuba toward human rights—then I would be willing to move toward normalizing relations with Cuba, as well.⁹⁵

It is *Cuba* that must cease its “aggravating influence” in this hemisphere and refrain

from the use of force in international affairs if normal relations are to be established, not the superpower that has instituted subfascist regimes throughout the hemisphere and pounded the countries of Indochina to dust, among other recent exploits. But even put that aside. Eight admitted attempts on Castro's life, a sponsored invasion, innumerable acts of sabotage—and still Carter can talk about Cuban external violence *and not be challenged or ridiculed by anyone whose voice can be heard*. Carter's reference to the state of civil rights in Cuba under the Batista dictatorship, to which he urges that Cuba should "recommit" itself, also elicited neither criticism nor satire. Where such hypocrisy and distortion can pass without comment, it is evident that the mass media are maintaining a system of thought control which can establish and nourish the Big Lie as effectively as any system of state censorship.

All of this may be regarded as commonplace.⁹⁶ In any society apologists will seek to portray external ventures in a favorable light, and the force of nationalism assures that their view prevails. Nevertheless, despite massive evidence to the contrary, liberal and social democratic opinion in the United States and Western Europe continues to regard the United States as an "exception," a country in which ideas flow freely and without discrimination and where the truth wins out over falsehood (*vide* Vietnam and Watergate). The myth is reinforced by material success and power, which have helped generate a high degree of self-righteousness and respect. And it is promulgated by an enormous propaganda apparatus that tends to dominate the domestic and international flow of "information". Power has also meant innumerable links and dependency relations with elites throughout the world, and thus strong psychological and interest pressures influencing them to perceive issues from the viewpoint of the U.S. leadership. The British Labor government's consistent support for the U.S. assault on Vietnam, with only the mildest admonitions and occasional foot-dragging, represents the typical governmental and leadership response outside the Communist world. (The Swedish government's open and sharp criticism was virtually unique in the "Free World," despite an unprovoked aggression of extraordinary savagery.) U.S. beneficence and good intentions are presumptions abroad that sustain self-righteousness and self-deception at home.

2.2.1 Sources and Processes

One of our main concerns in this work is the process of brainwashing under freedom as manifested in the selection and analysis of issues by the media and the relationship of such practice to human rights, to U.S. economic and political interests and to truthfulness. We will not attempt to unravel the detailed mechanisms of thought control—e.g., the

mechanisms by which editors decide what to publish and how to present it—but rather the general principles to which their practice conforms. We focus on the fact, for example, that the mass media bewail the fate of Cambodian victims of Communist terror on an almost daily basis,⁹⁷ while entirely ignoring or rationalizing Indonesian massacres in East Timor which are, on the available evidence, no less fearsome, and are being perpetrated in the course of unprovoked aggression—considered to be a rather serious matter since Nuremberg—and are carried out with U.S. weapons and *de facto* support.⁹⁸ The most extreme claims regarding Cambodian violence are immediately given credence and extensive publicity, and even if proven false are, with insignificant exceptions, not correctible in the mass media. We note, in contrast, that as regards East Timor, when the mass media on rare occasions touch gingerly on this subject, the “facts” offered are not only often false, but are also regularly skewed in the direction of apologetics for Indonesian terror, exactly in accord with the U.S. government propaganda line. We will also review in detail how the mass media systematically ignore, deny, or construct apologetics for subfascist terror, in striking contrast to their technique with regard to the Communist enemy.⁹⁹

An interesting methodological counterpart to this dichotomous treatment is that in regard to the states to be treated negatively (e.g., postwar Indochina), refugees or other victims are taken as the primary or exclusive source of information, even when other sources are available, and neither the selection of refugee testimony, the circumstances under which it is obtained, nor the credibility or bias of those transmitting their version of this testimony is subjected to critical analysis; whereas in the case of subfascist clients (Indonesia in East Timor, Guatemala, Brazil, etc.), the victims of terror are almost entirely disregarded as sources of information and the officials administering the terror or their public relations services are relied upon for “the facts.”

The pattern is, to be sure, a very familiar one, and one of the most striking illustrations of the effectiveness of the process of brainwashing under freedom is that the obvious truth is so rarely perceived. The pattern just described, which we will illustrate in considerable detail below, is just what we find in the totalitarian states, where conformity is ensured by application or threat of force. We are not surprised to discover, for example, that the Soviet press is indignant over the actions of the CIA and U.S. corporations in Chile or over U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, while it finds that Russian intervention in Hungary or Czechoslovakia is an expression of the solidarity of the Russian people and their worker’s state with the toiling masses who are defending themselves against CIA-fascist plots. And

if Ethiopia attempts to suppress Eritrean liberation forces with violence and terror during the period when it is a Soviet client, one would hardly expect to find an indignant factual account in *Pravda*. While all of this is obvious in the case of a totalitarian state, replication of a similar pattern in the Free Press passes without notice in the West, an indication of a form of “convergence” between the major socioeconomic systems that is a bit different from those sometimes discussed.

As regards both Indochina and the subfascist states, a clear “line” is discernible in the U.S. media (and to a significant extent, throughout the Free World). Indochina is subject to regular, almost daily attention, focusing with laser-like intensity on terror and oppression.¹⁰⁰ In keeping with this preoccupation, we find a gravitation to the most inflated estimates of repression and violence, a stripping away of the crucial historical context, a high moral tone, and non-correctibility of falsification and error. The line with regard to the U.S. client fascist states is just the reverse: only episodic attention, deemphasis of terror and avoidance of the human effects of subfascist processes, understatement of facts concerning state violence, stress on GNP (abstracted from the human consequences of a rise in GNP under subfascist conditions) and on alleged or promised “improvements,” and the correctibility of error if it is hostile to the subfascist state. Thus for each class of cases the volume of “information,” the tone, the emphasis and the interpretation are loaded with bias in favor of the doctrinal system preferred by those with power, and they function to implant in the public mind selected truths with all the effectiveness of a system of government censorship.

The “line” dispensed in this fashion by the Free Press conforms well to the economic interests of the U.S. multinational corporations and other large interests of dominant social groups. Cambodia, for example, is a Communist state. A focus on Cambodian terrorism, carefully extricated from the relevant historical context, serves important U.S. interests by allowing strong ideological points to be scored against radicalism, socialism, egalitarian ideals, and the dangers of Third World nationalism. Socialist terror, real or fabricated for the occasion, is useful, a fact that may help explain why distortion and fact-creation are permissible and uncorrectible. Cambodian terror also diverts attention away from the terror and violence that have been growing by leaps and bounds throughout the entire subfascist empire. Thus, Communist terror is positively and urgently needed as a diversion and to show that while we may be awful they are worse. Pained outcries about human rights violations in East Timor, Indonesia, Brazil, or Uruguay, while incomparably more significant in actually helping to relieve human suffering than the focus on Communist iniquity, would upset U.S. businessmen, bankers, and military-intelligence and other

government officials, who are not only pleased with subfascism but whose interests explain active U.S. sponsorship and support for it. Mass media selectivity, suppressions, exaggerations, and sometimes plain lying are thus subject to an entirely rational explanation in terms of primary systemic interests, whatever may be the precise mechanics whereby the system's "line" is implemented.

Alternative views and analyses are available in the United States, in fringe media that reach a minuscule sector of the population, probably less than 1%. Thus the "line" that Vietnam is now solely a land of "woes," refugees, and would-be refugees victimized by cruel oppressors—not a country suffering from the legacy of U.S. violence—is the virtually uncontested portrayal in the *New York Times* (daily circulation over 800,000 and enormous influence beyond) as well as in less reputable but even more widely circulated publications such as the *Reader's Digest* (circulation over 18 million in the U.S. alone) and *TV Guide* (circulation over 19 million). In contrast, a visiting Quaker delegation, including Vietnamese-speaking relief workers with long experience in Indochina, gains no access to the mass media, though its members are free to report their perception of a nation attempting to rebuild from the wreckage of the U.S. war in *New England Peacework* (monthly circulation 2,500). On Cambodia and East Timor, while the mass media adhere to an almost undeviating line, the balance is righted by some excellent coverage in the *International Bulletin* (circulation 6,000), and dissidents who expose press fabrications are, on rare occasions, permitted a letter to the editor. Typically, reports that emphasize the destruction caused by the United States in Indochina or the efforts and commitment of the victims reach a tiny circle of peace activists. Reports that ignore the U.S. role and find only woes and distress—attributed exclusively to Communist villainy—reach a mass audience and become part of the established truth.

Facts contrary to the line are available in the mass media in small, isolated doses lacking context, and may be culled out by the assiduous reader aware of the overwhelming built-in bias. Where powerful domestic interests are at odds over an issue (Nixon and Watergate, or to a lesser extent, Vietnam) there may be no uniform line, or the line may be subject to a fair amount of undercutting in the mass media. These deviations, mostly small but occasionally substantial, are important and valuable, and they help make a so-called "Free Press" in a wealthy society considerably better than a state-censored press, as does the sheer volume of news. But the adulation (including self-adulation) of the Free Press has long neglected the extent to which it also follows a "party line," especially on foreign affairs where the interests that shape policy are powerful and without any substantial internal opposition. Because it is not censored by the state, the Free Press enjoys an aura

of even-handedness and dedicated pursuit of truth—an illusion and a dangerous one—as we shall document throughout this work. Especially where the issues involve substantial U.S. economic and political interests and relationships with friendly or hostile states, the mass media usually function much in the manner of state propaganda agencies. And their pronouncements should be treated accordingly.

The impact of economic and political interests and power on the mechanics of mass media processing of the news is complicated and can only be summarized briefly here. One factor is ownership interests. Mass media enterprises are big business. Many of them are now divisions of conglomerates with a wide variety of activities, including the production and sale of weapons (e.g., Westinghouse, RCA, GE, and General Tire and Rubber); and their owners and managers share the interests and values of their business peers.¹⁰¹ They are an important part of an elite group that benefits from the status quo and plays a crucial role in the selection of editors and other key personnel, in policy decision criteria, and in fixing the “practical possibilities” of news selection. Advertisers are also important to the mass media, and the need to attract and maintain good relations with them helps define the limits of tolerable controversy. Sponsors and media together want to produce an output that will help sell goods, will not seriously disturb any substantial consuming group, and will be ideologically and politically compatible with the business system and the multinationals that increasingly dominate mass media advertising.

On television, the news itself is easily overrated in importance for ideology and attitude formation in comparison with the commercial and “entertainment” messages that combine dramatic intensity and uniformity of ideological substance. The action-drama-spy series of the immediate pre-Vietnam War era, continuing throughout the war, gave an ideological underpinning to the U.S. intervention. Especially the FBI espionage-type series, featuring the omnipresent Communist threat, “all quickly acquired sponsors” and “set the tone: excitement, patriotism, freedom, crusade”:¹⁰²

Exciting “entertainment” provided the escape route—seemingly unrelated yet subtly supportive of what was being done...the drama could have meaning only if viewers accepted, consciously or unconsciously, its underlying premise: that “we” faced enemies so evil and so clever that “the intricate means used to defeat them are necessary.”

News reporting proper only rarely upsets the supportive tone fixed by the more important commercial-entertainment avenues, but it hardly could, given the dominance of the government and business in news supply and the underlying business involvement in U.S. global efforts. The relationship between newsmen and business leaders was described by Walter Cronkite himself, considered one of the more critical members of the fraternity,

as “symbiotic”. He observed that “newspapers, broadcasting networks and outlets survive on the advertising revenues that come from business... Journalism can thrive only as long as the business community remains healthy enough to provide the funds. Business on the other hand, depends on journalism to foster its own growth—through the dissemination of information through news and advertising.”¹⁰³ Because of this symbiotic relationship, media efforts that focus on matters which business does not want discussed are rare (e.g., wage rates and labor conditions in the Dominican Republic, or the use of police torture in states offering excellent opportunities to U.S. business, such as the Philippines and Brazil, or regular and in-depth treatment of occupational diseases). Such efforts would involve serious potential costs in conflict and lost goodwill. Documentaries on such subjects would not sell well.¹⁰⁴ Since all of this is understood in advance, self-censorship causes them not to be prepared in the first place.

The government is another potent factor that mass media businesses must treat with care. It is an important source of news, has power in many spheres, and even directly regulates TV and radio mass media firms. The mass media find it in their self-interest to portray government actions in a favorable light.¹⁰⁵ On foreign affairs the government and business interests are major sources of news; and if their policies and interests are such that the daily murder of dissidents in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Guatemala is not only irrelevant but tends to discredit “friendly” regimes, they will not supply such information to the media and will even regard any featuring of such facts as offensive and contrary to the “national interest.”

The highly concentrated wire services are also closely linked to the U.S. government, business, and the mass media, and they are sensitive to the “national interest” as seen by dominant power groups. They are also tied in important ways to foreign governments in the U.S. sphere of influence, depending on them for news and as buyers of wire service copy in local media (including government operated stations and papers). Thus the wire services will tend not to seek out abuses of individual rights in Brazil or the Dominican Republic, even if quite severe, but will concentrate instead on Palestinian terror and Soviet and Cambodian violations of human rights. When Richard Arens and Survival International tried to interest the U.S. wire services and media in the destruction of the Paraguayan Indians, they found no response.¹⁰⁶ The stories had plenty of “punch” and would be highly salable, we believe, if the atrocities had occurred in an enemy state. But Paraguay is “friendly” and a responsive client state which grants ready access and privileges to U.S. corporate interests. Hence, the State Department consistently downplays

its abuses. No significant interest groups in the United States are troubled by a “final solution” for the Indians of Paraguay.

The “lines” followed by the Free Press thus seem to be readily explained as a function of the structure of U.S. interests and power that feed in to the media selection process at many levels. No central authority tells the mass media to “lay off” the Indonesian assault on East Timor or the daily abductions and murders in subfascist Latin American states. It is sufficient that occasional editorial boldness in dealing with these off-the-agenda matters could well result in significant flak from government officials, interested businessmen, or representatives of the terror states. Normally, self-censorship does the job. The self-censorship is conducted within the journal (or station) by news selectors who have developed a feel for the “line,” and who can identify and excise hot items likely to generate too much negative reaction upstairs or from important people outside.

News reporters and columnists also develop a feel for what is acceptable, and self-censorship thus occurs at their level on the basis of learned and understood limits of subject matter, tone, balance, and the like. A failure to self-censor on the part of reporters will result in the production of unused copy, as well as the loss of goodwill at the top in the face of such irresponsibility. Several people concerned with U.S.-backed massacres in East Timor, for example, have informed us that reporters did write stories that were “highly newsworthy” by the standards of professional journalism, but when these reporters found that such material was not going to be published, they simply stopped writing on this taboo topic. We have discovered in our own experience a different device that the media use to ensure that the unspeakable is not spoken. Thus journals refuse to publish material on East Timor, or on the media suppression of the ongoing massacres, on the grounds that this is not a story that will interest people, since no one has heard of it! Cambodian atrocities, in contrast, are an interesting story because they are in the spotlight of world attention. Thus a feedback process operates to ensure that the public remains properly indoctrinated. The process is set off in the right direction at the initiative of one or several of the perhaps dozen giant mass media enterprises (e.g., *Readers Digest*, *Time*, *NBC*, *New York Times*, etc.), or the U.S. government, which by themselves are easily able to focus the spotlight of attention on some worthy subject.

Even liberal commentators rarely focus on the *systematic character* of the U.S. support for right wing terror regimes and the simple economic logic of this “Washington connection.” This evasion may even be said to define the limits of permissible liberalism in the mass media—one may occasionally denounce torture in Chile and “death squads” in

Brazil, but (1) it is unacceptable to explain them as a result of official U.S. policy and preference and as plausibly linked to U.S. economic interests; and (2) it would be highly advisable even when merely denouncing subfascist terror to show “balance” by denouncing Soviet and left terror in equally vigorous terms. Otherwise, your days are numbered in those parts of the media that reach 99% of the U.S. population. Liberals are under such ideological pressure that when a Shcharansky or Ginzburg trial comes along, or an alleged Communist massacre, they hop onto the bandwagon with relief in their eagerness to rejoin their fellow citizens in the mainstream.¹⁰⁷ Needless to say, a similar balance is not required of establishment and extreme right wing commentators. One rarely finds any criticism of *Gulag Archipelago* for balance as a picture of Soviet society and its evolution, let alone for its neglect of unpleasant aspects of the Free World.

An amusing feature of the current U.S. media scene is that Soviet dissidents can publish almost at will in the *New York Times* Op Ed columns and receive publicity via press conferences, while U.S. dissidents have lost the limited access available to them at the height of the Vietnam War and are frozen out, unless they wish to petition for the rights of victims of Communism. The 99% of the population unreachable by U.S. dissidents are subject to the selective processes of the mass media that do not allow serious criticism of patriotic myths and untruths, with a brainwashing effect comparable to that of systems with explicit government censorship.

2.2.2 The Case of the Lost Bloodbath: The Supply of and Demand for Communist Atrocities

If we ask, for example, what the U.S. public has been allowed to learn about the “bloodbath” that Nixon, Rockefeller, Douglas Pike, Patrick Honey, and the mass media in general portrayed as a virtually certain result of a Communist victory in South Vietnam, the answer must be that the post-1975 media suppressions and distortions neatly complement the deception on violence *during* the war that made these predictions plausible. Since the bloodbath threat was an important rationale for intervention, and was reiterated time and again by our leaders, it might be expected that in the interests of the alleged victims that we were “saving” the media would have followed closely and reported on this matter.¹⁰⁸ Also, public education might be thought to require follow-ups on the solemn predictions on this subject by political leaders, experts, and editorialists. That is not the case, however. There has been no bloodbath, so far as is known; nothing like what happened in France in 1944 after the Germans were expelled, for example, despite the long and horrendous provocations (see Volume II, chapters 2, 4). But this

remarkable fact and the reconciliatory behavior of the Vietnamese Communists, which is unusual by historical standards as we shall see in Volume II, has been acknowledged grudgingly if at all in the small print of news reports. There have been few if any editorials pointing out the striking contrast with the behavior of the U.S. clients in Indonesia and Chile, for example, though the motives for revenge in Vietnam were incomparably greater. And there have been no analyses of the contrast between the official forecasts and the long portrayal of the enemy as barbarians bent on mass murder, on the one hand, and the currently available facts on the lost bloodbath, on the other. On the contrary, it is not unusual to describe the postwar situation in Vietnam as if there had indeed been unprecedented retribution and atrocities.¹⁰⁹

As we have pointed out and will examine at length in the next volume, the promised Vietnam bloodbath not having materialized, the mass media have found a new haven and basis for humanistic concern in Communist Cambodia. An important virtue of Cambodia from the standpoint of mass media serviceability is that information is not only sparse but is also dominated by reports of refugees—which are often selected and transmitted by sources of limited credibility and extreme ideological bias. The limited and controlled information also facilitates the standard technique of attributing to Communist iniquity all suffering, troubles, and deaths arising from a complex of causes, one of them being the quickly forgotten U.S. devastation and killing from 1969, particularly in the 1973 saturation bombing. Many people have been murdered and oppressed by the Communist regime and its cadres since its triumph in 1975, but the distortions and exaggerations on the part of the Western media in the search for a nefarious bloodbath have reached staggering proportions, and—as we shall show in detail—demonstrate as clearly as any topic considered in this study the workings of the Free Press as a system of propaganda.

The mass media take Communist atrocities where they can find them and invent them where they cannot. Since such atrocities serve a useful “educational” purpose—bringing the community together in support of a vast and growing military budget and whatever new imperial ventures the political leadership wishes to pursue—the veracity of the allegations is irrelevant. Even if ultimately proven to be fabrications, these proofs can be disregarded and a useful lie can be institutionalized by reiteration and suppression (see chapter 5 below and Volume II, for many examples). The same is true of false predictions. To cite only one of innumerable examples, the *Wall Street Journal* published a forecast by former CIA analyst, Samuel Adams, that 100,000 people would be murdered in the event of a Communist victory in Vietnam, which relied heavily on a hysterical propaganda tract

by Craig Hosmer put out by the Rand Corporation.¹¹⁰ The *Journal* refused at the time to publish any criticism of the Adams piece and has subsequently never gotten around to discussing where the Adams forecast went wrong. For readers of the *Journal*, the Vietnamese Communists might be said to have killed 100,000 people in a postwar bloodbath, an “Asian Auschwitz”(see note 109, chapter 2).

It is one of the public functions of both right-wing and official think tanks like the Rand Corporation, the Hoover Institution, the Hudson Institute, and academic social science scholarship more broadly, to show that *they* are evil and *we* are good—though we occasionally err. A liberal acknowledges that we also have flaws; a conservative tends to neglect ours entirely. But for both, Communist flaws (and bloodshed) are front and center, a matter of the “Communist essence,” while such Western defects as may be noted and deplored are “aberrations.” A Max Lerner, for example, treats the human rights issue as a potential plus for the United States; his premise is an explicit Cold War chauvinism that defines the United States as the force for good in the world, which “can strengthen its world position” by this vehicle.¹¹¹ Lerner will not discuss the U.S. role in violations of civil rights in the Third World or even address the question of our disproportionate focus on civil rights East of the Elbe—Lerner would no doubt like the United States to pursue freedom instead of propping up little tyrants and torturers all over the world, but if our leaders choose otherwise a “responsible” liberal will not explore the systematic factors involved and will pretend that people who do apply normal canons of rationality to U.S. policies and their origins must be either “apologists for Communism” or otherwise outside the spectrum of tolerable discussion.

The media are only one component of the general system of indoctrination and thought control. A fuller discussion of the processes of brainwashing under freedom would explore the schools and universities as well. When the media want an “expert opinion” on some topic of current interest, they naturally turn to academic specialists in that area. And the state propaganda system is generally well-served by this device. The academic professions rarely stray from orthodoxy in interpreting matters of sensitive concern or private power. Like the media, academic scholarship in general cautiously refrains from analytic investigation of U.S. foreign policy and its roots in domestic power. Crucial documentation that illuminates these issues is simply placed under a ban, for example, the high-level planning studies of the Council on Foreign Relations and the State Department during World War II. Dangerous topics, such as the role of corporate interests in foreign policy, are studiously avoided, as if under a taboo. Young scholars who might wish to

undertake a systematic and rational analysis of the nature and exercise of U.S. power and its domestic determinants are steered in other directions, made to understand that there is little future in this direction. A network of pressures, including grants, promotions, access to external (state and private) power, class interest, the comforts, prestige and privilege that are natural concomitants of what Hans Morgenthau once called “our conformist subservience to those in power”—all of these factors and others combine to provide an intellectual milieu in which few serious questions will be raised about sensitive issues. Those who may, nevertheless, choose to raise and pursue them can either be weeded out (if they are young and unprotected) or simply ignored or dismissed as “unreasonable,” much as organized religion in the period of its dominance could insulate itself from unworthy thoughts.^{[112](#)}

In such ways, a doctrinal system is constructed that is responsive to the demands of the establishment. Questions that will be serviceable to its interests are intensively explored while potentially embarrassing topics are put aside, and state and private power are protected from critical scrutiny. The doctrinal system that evolves in this way is available to be sampled by journalists and commentators who have their own reasons to keep close to the “party line.”

We have not discussed other crucial elements of the system of brainwashing under freedom, for example, the organized and quite extensive efforts of business to control the contents of school curricula on sensitive topics, or to manage the flow of news directly through the mechanisms of what specialists in public relations call “the engineering of consent.”^{[113](#)} Nor have we attempted to elaborate the network of shared associations—class solidarity, common educational background, social contact, and status, etc.—that link elite groups in the private economy, the state, publishing, the news corporations, the universities, and the professions. These too are major factors in helping to create a world view that is protective of established power and that insulates it from unwelcome inquiry. A fuller investigation of these questions would also consider the occasional exercise of brute force when needed as a technique for undermining and disrupting radical tendencies or popular movements, even those with aims that are within the theoretical framework of shared belief such as the civil rights movement. A fuller study would also explore the historical roots of the U.S. system of indoctrination in an immigrant society that by a unique combination of natural advantages was, for a long period, able to offer a share in expanding wealth and power to those who were willing to toe the line. These topics, barely noted here, are also rarely investigated within the framework of orthodox opinion

that dominates the academic world, the schools, the mass media, and the outlook of the great mass of the population, which has little opportunity to inquire into its character and limits.

Benign Terror

3.1 The Semantics of Terror and Violence: Retail Violence as “Terror”—Wholesale Violence as Maintaining “Order” and “Security”

The words “terror” and “terrorism” have become semantic tools of the powerful in the Western world. In their dictionary meaning, these words refer to “intimidation” by the “systematic use of violence” as a means of both governing and opposing existing governments. But current Western usage has restricted the sense, on purely ideological grounds, to the retail violence of those who oppose the established order. Throughout the Vietnam War these words were restricted to the use of violence in resistance to regimes so lacking in indigenous support that Joseph Buttinger rejects General Lansdale’s own designation “fascistic” as too complimentary.¹ The essence of U.S. policy in South Vietnam, and elsewhere in Indochina, was intimidation by virtually unrestrained violence against the peasant populations. Nevertheless, this was not terror or terrorism, invidious words reserved for the relatively small and much more selective use of force by the NLF, from the time when the former Viet Minh were authorized to use violence in self-defense against official U.S.-backed terrorism in the late 1950s.²

In the Third World, the United States set itself firmly against revolutionary change after World War II, and has struggled to maintain the disintegrating post-colonial societies within the “Free World,” often in conflict with the main drift of social and political forces within those countries. This conservative and counterrevolutionary political objective has defined the spectrum of acceptable and unacceptable violence and bloodshed. From this perspective, killings associated with revolution represent a resort to violence which is both reprehensible, and improper as a means for bringing about social change. Such atrocities are carried out by “terrorists.” The word “violence” itself, like “terrorism,” is generally confined to the use of force by elements and movements which we oppose. An AID report of 1970, for example, refers to the improving capability of the South Vietnamese police, then very possibly the most extensive employers of torture in the world, as “preventing the spread of violence.”³ And the 1967 “moderate scholars” statement on Asian policy, sponsored by Freedom House, defended the U.S. assault on Vietnam and passed in silence over the mass slaughters in Indonesia, referring delicately only to the “dramatic changes” there as encouraging, while at the same time explicitly condemning those who are “committed to the thesis that violence is the best means of effecting change” (presumably

the NLF, DRY and the Indonesian Communists).⁴

Bloodbaths carried out by counterrevolutionary forces are regarded in a more favorable light, as they are in the interest of a return of Third World populations to the desirable “measure of passivity and defeatism” that prevailed before World War II,⁵ also commonly referred to as “stability,”⁶ or “political equilibrium.” Killings undertaken to return these populations to passivity are rarely described as bloodbaths or as involving “terror” or the use of violence—they are “readjustments” or “dramatic changes” tolerated or applauded as necessary and desirable. This is true whether the bloodbath destroys both the organizational apparatus and the population base of radical movements (as in Indonesia), or kills more modestly, merely disorganizing and terrorizing a population sufficiently to permit rightist totalitarian rule (as in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala or Brazil).⁷

The same Orwellian usage was standard on the home front during the Vietnam War. Students, war protestors, Black Panthers, and assorted other dissidents were effectively branded as violent and terroristic by a government that dropped more than five million tons of bombs over a dozen year period on a small peasant country with no means of self-defense. Beating of demonstrators, infiltration of dissident organizations, extensive use of agent provocateur tactics, even FBI complicity in political assassination were not designated by any such terms.

In the 1970s this usage has been institutionalized as a device to facilitate an exclusive preoccupation with the lesser terror of the alienated and the dispossessed, serving virtually as a disguised form of apologetics for state terror and client fascism. Many analysts simply *define* “terror” as retail and unofficial terror, and will talk of nothing else. Thus Walter Laqueur, in his general study of terrorism, writes: “My concern in the present study is with movements that have used systematic terrorism as their main weapon; others will be mentioned only in passing.”⁸ The state is not a “movement,” although with an interest in quantitatively significant violence, the terminology could easily have been adjusted to include governments captured by terror-prone “movements,” such as the Nazis or the fascist military cliques in Latin America. This would be incompatible with Laqueur’s purposes; and, ruling out state terror, all that remains is “terrorism from below,” for which he reserves the term “terrorism” by definition, much as one might use the title *Terrorism* for a study of Jewish violence against the Germans, 1933-1945.

The victims of “terrorism” in this restricted sense have been far fewer throughout the world than those killed by any number of individual states; Laqueur gives an aggregate figure of 6-8,000, more than half in Ulster and Argentina, between 1966-1976 (p. 213).

Nevertheless, his study of “terrorism” is limited to retail terror. This terminological decision affords endless possibilities for dredging up incidents of anti-establishment violence and for demonstrating its frequent senselessness and lack of specific connection with any injustice, while enhancing the general disregard for the wholesale terror of the established states. It is consoling to the privileged in the West to learn that the troublemakers of the world are evil and irrational outsiders, not responding to just grievances. It is also helpful to self-esteem, patriotism and business-as-usual to have ruled off the agenda any details on ripping out fingernails or attaching electrodes to genitals and nipples of the trouble-makers, now standard practice among Free World forces engaged in combating “terrorism.”

It is interesting to observe Laqueur’s fine discrimination as he exploits the possibilities. He manages to get in a great many gratuitous digs at the “enemy” while ignoring or playing down more significant state terror. For example, he twice mentions the alleged killing of several thousand administrative cadres in South Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s by Communists, although he concedes that this example does not conform to his concept of terrorism since such violence was not the primary political means of the NLF—but nowhere does he mention U.S.-Diem terror in South Vietnam, which occurred earlier, was far greater in scope, was a primary cause of Communist terror, and was the *principal* political means employed by Free World forces.

Laqueur’s treatment of Latin American terror is particularly illuminating. He says that

most of the terrorist operations [in Brazil] took place in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo and the number of victims, excluding terrorists, was relatively small—about one hundred killed over a period of five years. But the terrorists had an excellent flair for publicity and good connections with the media and their exploits were extensively reported all over the globe. There is no reason to disbelieve the reports about systematic torture used against captured terrorists; but it is also true that the terrorists had few, if any, scruples; their victims included farm workers who had stumbled on terrorist hideouts, motorists killed by terrorists who needed their cars, and boatmen cut down after a getaway at gunpoint.⁹

In context, these remarks amount to barely disguised apologetics for neo-fascism and torture. Consider that:

- (1) Laqueur can only grudgingly admit that terrorists in Brazil may be tortured (“no reason to disbelieve”).
- (2) He gives no details on the nature and extent of official torture, but does give specifics on selected examples of retail terror.
- (3) He fails to point out that large numbers have been tortured in Brazil who were *not* terrorists and that torture began, proceeded, and continues quite apart from

the existence of any perceived terrorist threat.

- (4) In discussing the “scruples” of the Brazilian terrorists, he ignores the question of whether these exclude torture, perhaps because they *did* seem to have scruples on that score or perhaps because the issue does not seem to him of much importance.
- (5) He fails to mention that the terrorists in Brazil along with many non-terrorist dissidents are hunted down like animals and threatened with torture and death upon capture, whereas the official torturers do their work at their leisure and with impunity.
- (6) He denigrates the terrorists by snide remarks about their flair for publicity and access to the media, not mentioning that non-violent dissidents had no access to the media in Brazil and no machinery for bringing about peaceful social change after the U.S.-backed military coup. Nowhere is there a single paragraph of discussion of the nature and quality of neofascism, its impact on the population, its origins, or its role in eliciting the terror to which he devotes his exclusive concern.

Where there is an obvious connection between terrorism and injustice, as Laqueur grudgingly concedes in the case of Latin America, he simply raises the question whether the terrorists’ solutions would be preferable to those of the military junta, without discussing the nature of the grievances, their sources, or the nature and availability of other modes or terms of resolution. By this evasive ploy and his own limited concept of “terrorism” Laqueur leaves no viable option to fascism-as-usual.

As soon as we investigate real instances of retail terror, we begin to see the importance of avoiding such detail in maintaining the preferred message in studies such as Laqueur’s. Consider, for example, the sensational kidnapping of the American Ambassador to Brazil, Burke Elbrick, in 1969.¹⁰ His kidnappers certainly wanted to reach the media, long closed by military censorship; they insisted that a manifesto be read over radio and television as a condition for the Ambassador’s release. Their second condition was that the military junta “free those men and women who were being tortured most savagely,” including one sick 70-year-old Bolshevik who had spent 20 years in prison under various regimes and was one of the first political prisoners abused after the 1964 military coup when “a Brazilian army major had tied him to the back of a jeep and dragged him bleeding through the streets of Recife.” After these demands were met, Elbrick was released. He was sufficiently impressed by his treatment and the political discussions he had with his

terrorist captors so that “he could not bring himself to denounce” them but could only say “that they were misguided, that their tactics were wrong,” though there was no denying “their bravery or their dedication or the consideration they had shown him.” At that point, though Elbrick did not know it, “his diplomatic career was over.” The released prisoners, meanwhile, had a good deal to say about the horrendous torture they had suffered at the hands of the army, navy, and police in torture rooms decorated with the familiar red, white, and blue symbol of U.S. AID.

A look at the other torture chambers of the Free World, to which we return, quickly reveals the significance of what escapes Laqueur’s tunnel vision. In *Le Monde* (7 September 1978), Jean-Pierre Clerc reports an interview with Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, the Uruguayan conservative who received the largest number of votes in the last presidential election and is now in exile, one of the half-million inhabitants of this country of 2.7 million people who have fled since the military coup of 1973 with little notice in the U.S., and who succeeded in fleeing his refuge in Argentina after the military coup there in 1976. He recounts the destruction of Uruguayan democracy, offering as the sole explanation “foreign intervention,” i.e., the application of the Kissinger doctrine of establishing “stable regimes” in Latin America; the systematic torture of 25,000 people, counting only the most severe cases; and the decline of real wages to a 1977 level that is at 60% of the 1962 level. A response to “terrorism” in Laqueur’s sense? Wilson Ferreira points out that the military coup that turned Uruguay into a chamber of horrors took place after the Tupamaros had been “completely destroyed”; “from June 1973 until today, there has not been a single subversive action. But the government kills, kidnaps, imprisons, tortures.” They began by torturing the Tupamaro urban guerrillas, then union activists, then political militants and intellectuals, and finally they have victimized “the entire population, without consideration of ideology, out of habit.” But none of this falls under the concept of “terrorism,” in the sense of contemporary ideology.

It is a conventional cliché that the media are playing into the hands of the terrorists by offering them publicity. Laqueur is indignant over the access that terrorists in Brazil have to the world’s media, which encourages them in their nefarious anti-state activities, while J. Bowyer Bell is upset over the fact that “as skilled producers of irresistible news, terrorists can control the media.”¹¹ This conception of media control by terrorists contains a germ of truth; occasionally the retail terrorists do succeed in publicizing a message that they wish to convey, as in the Brazilian case just mentioned. But this characterization neglects a more salient feature of the situation, namely, that the media almost always suppress or distort the issues pressed by the terrorists and discredit them by an almost

exclusive focus on their violence or threats of violence. Thus the media allow the terrorists to “use” them only for media purposes; to inflate the importance of retail terror, obfuscate its nature and sources, and distract attention from more significant issues such as official terror and institutionalized injustice. Laqueur and Bell represent the somewhat more sophisticated establishment commentary on terror. A cruder version is offered by Arnold Beichman in one of a featured pair of articles in the *Boston Globe* (2 April 1978) on “the historical use of terrorism and the punishment for those who practice it.” In the introductory article, James Joll warns of “the romantic appeal that terrorism still has for some people, who, while deploring terrorist actions, have too bad a conscience about the evils of contemporary society to condemn such acts when carried out by others”; the noted historian failed to identify those who refuse to condemn terrorist acts, and indeed they would be hard to find, though it is a common and convenient illusion that they represent some significant force in the West. But Beichman far excels his British colleague as a demonologist. He too warns of the danger of the alleged support for terrorism among the intellectuals, asking whether the Red Army Faction appeals “to some dark side of the German intelligentsia as did the Weather Underground to a surprisingly large sector of the American intelligentsia” (which he does not identify, naturally, since this “surprisingly large sector” is a figment of the imagination). He then warns of the “desire to spread the guilt of the terrorists among friends, relatives, class, society.” As evidence, he offers the following gem: “Thus, Anthony Lukas’s 1971 book on the student terrorists was titled *Don’t Shoot, We Are Your Children*.”¹² But, Beichman thunders, “the terrorist who has unilaterally declared war on innocent people cannot be regarded as a misguided utopian or benevolent revolutionary: terrorists are not our children.” We should deal with them as follows: “The terrorist who attacks the innocent must know in advance that a drumhead court-martial will follow his apprehension; and execution, his conviction. There can be no forgiving the literal killer of the literal innocent.”

It need hardly be noted explicitly that for Beichman, like Laqueur, the term “terrorism” never includes a bombardier on a B-52 mission over Indochina wiping out entire villages of “literal innocents,” nor the higher authorities ultimately responsible for such attacks—at a certain level of apologetics, state terror, no matter how gross, occupies a sacred place exempt from invidious language. But Reichman’s hysteria over dissidence is so great that for him, civil rights workers become indistinguishable from bomb throwers in the frightening array of opponents of the holy state. Lukas’s book, whose “terrorist” children so enrage Beichman, is a study of 10 selected young “1960s people,” of whom only one participated in a true act of violence—a drug addict, she was bludgeoned to death. The ten

include tenant organizers, civil rights workers, pacifist war resisters, ghetto organizers, etc., whose acts of violence extended to burning draft cards or, on occasion, occupying university buildings. Most of those in the group did not even reach these heights of terrorist atrocity. In the group are young men and women who represent the finest moments of high principle and courage in modern U.S. history, as they braved the real terror of racist violence at the cutting edge of the civil rights movement, or steadfastly bore witness against the barbarism of a state for which Beichman was an outspoken apologist. These are the “terrorists” who have “unilaterally declared war on innocent people.”

It is quite possible that this leading academic specialist on terrorism did not look beyond the title of Lukas’s book and is merely guilty of egregious incompetence in jumping from the “terrorism” of Lukas’s children to his own drum-head court-martials. But in the current state of fright among establishment intellectuals, who were indeed shaken by the youthful challenges of the 1960s, such subtle distinctions as may exist between civil rights workers and bomb-throwers are blurred. In the eyes of the Lord they are all one or another form of “terrorist,” challenging the established order.

On the theory that there is no form of apologetics for state violence that will not be found in the current productions of the intelligentsia, we might next ask whether it is possible even to find justification for torture to complement Beichman’s proposals for drumhead court-martials for retail terrorists.¹³ Anyone familiar with U.S. intellectual life will turn to the *New Republic*, long a primary organ of the U.S. liberal intelligentsia, to see whether even this stage of moral degradation has been achieved. Indeed it has, and it will also cause no surprise to find it emerging in relation to Israeli policy. Since its smashing victory in 1967, Israel has played a role among the U.S. intelligentsia that is reminiscent of the Soviet Union in the Stalinist period (though the reasons are different the style is similar). Reviewing the detailed *London Sunday Times* study of torture in Israel and the Israeli government response (but not mentioning the devastating reply of the *Sunday Times* to the Israeli rebuttal), Seth Kaplan explains in the *New Republic* that “the question of how a government should treat people who regularly detonate bombs in public places is not susceptible to simple absolutism, such as the outright condemnation of ‘torture’.”¹⁴ One may have to use extreme measures—call them ‘torture’—to deal with a terrorist movement whose steady tactic is the taking of human life.”¹⁵

To our knowledge, nothing comparable has appeared in the West in recent years apart from ultra-right circles in France during the Algerian War. But it is not very surprising that

an explicit defense of torture should appear in a leading journal of U.S. liberalism—eliciting no comment or protest—when the victims are Arabs and the agents are Israelis. The selective Western view of Mideast terrorism over the years deserves a study in itself, particularly, since Palestinians have been made the very symbol of “terrorism” in the course of the recent efforts to identify “terrorism” (in the Laqueur-Beichman sense) as the primary scourge of modern life with little attention to its origins.¹⁶

In mass media jargon today, Argentine guerillas attacking a police station are terrorists, while the police, military and officially protected “death squads” and thugs are “maintaining order”—even when the guerillas are exterminated and the abduction and murder of union leaders, scientists, political activists, priests, and the wives and children of people objectionable to the regime continues unabated. The widely respected Permanent Assembly for Human Rights in Argentina estimates that the number of persons detained by the armed forces or security organizations who have “disappeared” since the 1976 coup is “not less than 15,000.”¹⁷ Martin Ennals, Secretary General of Amnesty International, reported recently that altogether “about 30,000 people have disappeared in Latin America in the last 10 years after being seized by official security forces or their sympathizers”; this in a 50-word news item in the *Boston Globe* (26 Nov. 1978), exceeding by 50 words the coverage in the national press. By contrast, the State Department’s Office for Combatting Terrorism estimates a worldwide total of 292 deaths caused by “retail terrorism” from 1973 through 1976.¹⁸ The daily Argentine official and semi-official abductions and murders, largely ignored in the United States, are sometimes reported as simply three-liners on the back pages in the language of the handouts of the government implementing the terror, or written up by Juan de Onis in the *New York Times* very even-handedly—the extremists of the left and right are engaged in disturbing mutual violence, in which the right seems to have the edge in the killing competition, with General Videla in the “middle,” sincerely trying to contain the deterioration but frustrated by unexplained forces.¹⁹

Similarly, “normal” police intimidation, killing, and torture in such countries as Guatemala or Brazil are barely newsworthy in the United States. The Brazilian death squads, also recruited from among the police, came into existence in 1964 and have thrived ever since. They even own property and operate a newspaper, *O Gringo*. And they are responsible for murders running into the thousands. The *Jornal do Brasil* of April 20, 1970, reports:

In Guanabara and in the state of Rio alone, the number of deaths attributed to the Death Squad is more than 1,000, that is, almost 400 a year. The victims show signs of unnecessary cruelty. For example, between

January 11 and July 1, 1969, 40 bodies were found in the waters of the Macacu River, buried in the mud near the bridge between Maje and Itaborai. All of the bodies, in an advanced state of decomposition, still showed the marks of handcuffs and burns caused by cigarettes and multiple bruising; some of them were still handcuffed. According to the findings of the autopsy, it was noted that many had been tortured, shot, and then drowned.

In the review *Veja* of March 3, 1971, the director of the periodical states that out of 123 homicides attributed to the death squad in Sao Paulo between November, 1968 and June, 1970, only five had been investigated by the magistrate. It is evident that these killings are carried out under the authority and protection of the state. They are numerous, sadistic, and reveal a Nazi-like social pathology that should be highly newsworthy and deserving of editorial attention. A Brazilian Bishop can refer to these official terrorists as “thugs” (see below, p. 293), but such language will not be found in the Free Press. The Brazilian junta is U.S.-sponsored, very friendly to U.S. business—if not to its own dissenters and poor—and is regarded with positive enthusiasm by our bankers and businessmen. Wholesale violence by fascist client states is not “terror.”

3.2 Benign and Constructive Terror

In the official version of pre-1975 Vietnamese history only we and our spunky Saigon ally stood between the 17 million people of South Vietnam and a bloodbath by the barbarian hordes of North Vietnam (DRV) and their southern arm, the Vietcong. The impression conveyed in the standard media fare was one of humanitarian concern for the victims of “violence” on the part of U.S. leaders, and the public was even led to believe that our presence in Vietnam and the regrettable (perhaps even excessive) use of force that accompanied it was a result of the resort to violence and threat of a bloodbath on the part of others.

Even a cursory examination of recent history, however, suggests that concern over violence and bloodbaths in Washington (in Moscow and Peking as well) is highly selective. Some bloodbaths seem to be looked upon as benign or even positive and constructive; only particular ones have been given publicity and regarded as heinous and deserving of indignation. For example, after the CIA-sponsored right-wing coup in Cambodia in March, 1970, Lon Nol quickly organized a pogrom-bloodbath against local Vietnamese in an effort to gain peasant support. Estimates of the numbers of victims of this slaughter range upward from 5,000, and grisly reports and photographs of bodies floating down the rivers were filed by Western correspondents. Some 330,000 out of a total of 450,000 Vietnamese in Cambodia are estimated to have been expelled or to have fled the country in the course of this campaign.²⁰ The United States and its client

government in Saigon invaded Cambodia shortly thereafter, but not to stop the bloodbath or protect its victims; on the contrary, these forces moved in to support the organizers of the slaughter, who were on the verge of being overthrown. The small-scale Lon Nol bloodbath was, of course, followed by a major bloodbath with the bombing and invasion of Cambodia by the United States and its Saigon affiliate. In the words of one observer with an intimate knowledge of Cambodia:

Cambodia has been subjected in its turn to destruction by American air power. The methodical sacking of economic resources, of rubber plantations and factories, of rice fields and forests, of peaceful and delightful villages which disappeared one after another beneath the bombs and napalm, has no military justification and serves essentially to starve the population.^{[21](#)}

Those who paid close attention to the U.S. slaughter of Cambodians in 1969-1971 would have had no reason to be surprised by the intensive bombing of heavily populated areas in a last-ditch effort to delay the collapse of the U.S.-backed regime three years later.^{[22](#)} This was simply a minor variant of a policy, consistently pursued in Cambodia, which President Nixon called “the Nixon doctrine in its purest form.”^{[23](#)} Nor should the slight concern of the U.S. media with the disappearance of “peaceful and delightful villages [and human beings]...beneath the bombs and napalm” from 1969 (and even earlier^{[24](#)}), in contrast with the intense preoccupation over the plight of Cambodians *after* the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge,^{[25](#)} surprise anyone who follows the principles of mass media selection of worthy victims.

The regularly publicized and condemned bloodbaths, whose victims are deserving of serious concern, often turn out, upon close examination, to be largely fictional. These mythical or semi-mythical bloodbaths have served an extremely important public relations function in mobilizing support for U.S. military intervention. This was particularly true in the case of Vietnam. Public opinion tended to be negative and the war-makers had to labor mightily to keep people in line. The repeated resort to fabrication points up the propagandistic role that the “bloodbath” has played in Washington’s devoted attention to this subject.

The great public relations lesson of Vietnam, nevertheless, is that the “big lie” can work, despite occasional slippages of a free press. Not only can it survive and provide service regardless of entirely reasonable or even definitive refutations,^{[26](#)} but certain patriotic truths also can be established firmly for the majority by constant repetition. With the requisite degree of cooperation by the mass media, the government can engage in “atrocities management” with almost assured success, by means of sheer weight of information releases, the selective use of reports of alleged enemy acts of atrocity, and the

creation and embroidery of bloodbath stories and myths. These myths never die; they are pulled from the ashes and put forward again and again whenever the government needs some renewed public fervor for bloodshed, although repudiating evidence is readily available and is occasionally permitted to reach the printed page as a presentation of the “other side” of the question.^{[27](#)}

At the same time, our own atrocities can be dismissed as the “unintended consequences of military action,”^{[28](#)} or as an historical inevitability for which we bear no responsibility,^{[29](#)} or as “isolated incidents” for which the guilty are punished under our system of justice. Thus that distinguished spokesman for the sacredness of each individual, William Buckley, Jr., concluded from the Vietnam experience that

...there are nations more civilized than others, for reasons of history and providence however freakish. We would not, in America, in this day and age, treat prisoners of war the way the Vietnamese did. And we are, however humbly, reminded that we fought in Indochina to repel the atavistic forces that gave historical and moral justification to the torture and humiliation of the individual.^{[30](#)}

While awaiting Buckley’s reflections on the atavistic forces that seem to have turned U.S. client states into charnel houses, we note that his moralizing was provoked by the reports of returning U.S. POWs. Even if we were to grant the precise accuracy of their reports, they hardly begin to compare in horror with the explicit and detailed reports by U.S. veterans of the treatment of Vietnamese prisoners (not to speak of the civilian population) by the U.S. armed forces.^{[31](#)} Foreign observers, less circumspect than Buckley, commented that “the Nixon administration has had nothing to say about the atrocities which have been going on for many years in [Saigon] prisons and which still go on, often under the direct supervision of former American police officers” and noted that the U.S. POWs “who talked of Oriental tortures were all able to stand up and speak into microphones, showing scars here and there,” whereas the handful of prisoners released from the U.S.-run Saigon jails “were all incurably crippled while prolonged malnutrition had turned them into grotesque parodies of humanity.”^{[32](#)}

More balanced minds than Hook or Buckley perceive that “unfortunately, the record is not unflawed” and that “the highest United States authorities cannot escape responsibility” for certain “violations of the spirit if not the letter of international law...even if the violations were not expressions of official policy”—while insisting, to be sure, that the “damning indictment of the Vietnamese communists...cannot be erased by the pious denials of the North Vietnamese or their apologists in this country” and that “a compelling case can and should be made against the North Vietnamese for their clear violations of the Geneva Convention of 1949...”^{[33](#)}

In chapter five below and in Volume II, we will touch upon the amply documented record of the “spirit” of the U.S. assault on Indochina and its relation to both law, morality, and enemy violence.

3.3 Post-Colonial Rot and Permanent Counterrevolution

That revolutions are costly in human life and that those undertaking them should weigh these heavy costs against any potential gains is obvious enough. Less attention has been paid to the enormous human costs that have resulted from counterrevolutionary attempts to forestall revolution and successful “stabilization.” On the evidence of recent decades of U.S.-sponsored counterrevolution, a good case can be made that these are far more bloody, on the average, than revolutions. This is conspicuously so where modern technology is put to work in direct counterrevolutionary intervention. Here the indiscriminate violence puts into operation a feedback process of “Communist creation” that affords the intervention legitimacy in the eyes of the imperial power while at the same time giving it a genocidal potential.

Since the role of counterrevolution is to allow local and foreign elites to preserve and enlarge privileged positions, terror may be required on an institutionalized and durable basis. Sometimes an initial wave of savage repression that destroys mass organizations and their leadership may weaken resistance, reduce the population to apathy, and permit elite rule with only modest doses of follow-up violence. The prospects for pacification without continuing terror are questionable in an age of improving communications and revolutionary ferment, when the subfascist states so often combine minimal domestic support, increasing exploitation and great ineptitude. Under these circumstances, durable and periodically intensified repression may be necessary and even occasional foreign intervention against “internal aggression” by the populace.³⁴ Ideally, the proper role of the military junta in post-Vietnam U.S. thinking is to *prevent* Cubas and Vietnams by anticipatory counter-subversion, which nips any radical or seriously reformist tendencies in their earliest stages before they become “problems.” In the words of General Maxwell Taylor:

The outstanding lesson [of the Vietnam War] is that we should never let another Vietnam-type situation arise again. We were too late in recognizing the extent of the subversive threat. We appreciate now that every young [sic] emerging country must be constantly on the alert, watching for those symptoms which, if allowed to develop unrestrained, may eventually grow into a disastrous situation such as that in South Vietnam. We have learned the need for a strong police force and a strong police intelligence organization to assist in identifying early the symptoms of an incipient subversive situation.³⁵

This is a call for counterrevolutionary police states, one that has been widely heeded in

the U.S. sphere of influence.

Consistent U.S. support for counterrevolutionary violence in the Third World flows from structure and interests. Since this real and fundamental drift of policy flies in the face of proclaimed democratic and egalitarian ideals, the United States periodically announces that it is turning over a new leaf and will henceforth support “reform” and “structural change” (more recently, also, “human rights”). The leaf has always turned out to be of the fig variety. The Alliance for Progress was proclaimed with great fanfare as a program designed to help bring about critically needed reforms in Latin America, but like “land reform” in South Vietnam the program was quickly thrust aside in favor of plain repression. The basic conflict between changes that would benefit the Third World’s masses and the interests of the United States and its chosen instruments has always been decisive. The organizational power necessary for change and campaigns for reform and for the redistribution of income and rights are quickly seen as a subversive threat incompatible with “security” (that is, U.S. domination and assured economic and military access). This was painfully evident in the U.S. reaction to what were essentially reformist efforts by Brazilian leaders in the 1950s and early 1960s, a crucial episode in recent history that we have already briefly mentioned.

Prior to the Brazilian military coup of 1964, U.S. policy makers felt threatened by the efforts of Kubitschek, Quadros and then Goulart to strengthen internal labor and peasant organizations as a counter-weight to the United States and to U.S.-related comprador and military interests. Such developments would have allowed the Brazilian leadership some freedom of action to carry out an independent economic policy and a program of social reform by freeing it from the tremendous constraints of U.S. economic power. This was intolerable to the United States and led it to take steps and encourage forces that steadily sapped Brazilian democracy and, finally, to collaborate in the 1964 coup. The successor regime of generals has allowed no independent labor or peasant organizations that might contribute to change internally or disturb external dependency and semi-colonial status. The military junta has identified all criticism of the United States and any reformist (let alone radical) tendencies as Communist-subversive and deserving of torture or death. According to one authority, “subject to United States military influence on anti-Communism the professional army officer becomes hostile to any sort of populism.”³⁶ Forcible repression of reform or of any effort to organize or speak in the interest of the exploited majority has been a key function of the military in Brazil, and despite some tut-tuts over torture and political murder, the new Brazil has been warmly approved and rewarded by the U.S. elite. Accordingly, its methods for maintaining “stability” have been

extended widely in the U.S. sphere of influence. The numbers tortured and murdered by these U.S. agents of permanent counterrevolution run into the scores of thousands.

Beyond the costs of repression *per se* are the human costs of “success” in keeping Third World populations in the desired state of “passivity and defeatism,” such as has been achieved in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, or Guatemala. In these countries, there has been a restoration of a corrupting dependency on a foreign power, rule by a reactionary exploiting elite, social polarization, degradation and insecurity for large numbers, and a low level of morale and cultural esprit. As has been pointed out in a series of eloquent Brazilian church statements, the majority of the population constitutes a “whole universe of atomized workers, powerless and obliged to humiliate themselves before the power of the landlords.”³⁷ Large numbers of Brazilian *posseiros* (squatters) colonized and cleared unoccupied land, but

now, without land or legal protection, they are being expelled from the places they cleared, where they worked and had their children. Any resistance to this expulsion is overcome by hunger, beatings, house burnings or death.

The life of the Indians, the first and real owners of the land, is a little like that of the *posseiros*. Our Indians are also moved off their land. The scandals and injustices that are done to these people are now widely known. Every day a new fraud takes away another piece of land from the Indians.

The peons who live without any labor guarantees, make up a totally unprotected social class. They are separated from their families, live like animals, and are easy prey to alcoholism and vice. Beyond that, in the intensive system of cattle raising, with cutting down the forest and planting grass, there is little left over for the small farmer. Mechanization on the large haciendas makes it more and more difficult to find work.³⁸

While the U.S. establishment has succeeded in reconciling all this with its Christian-libertarian conscience, the churches of Latin America have been driven into the struggle by their recognition of the enormity of the injustices built into the U.S. system of client fascism:

The socio-economic, political and cultural situation of our people is a challenge to our Christian conscience. Undernourishment, infant mortality, prostitution, illiteracy, unemployment, cultural and political discrimination, exploitation, growing discrepancies between rich and poor, and many other consequences point to a situation of institutionalized violence in our country.³⁹

In the Brazilian church document just quoted there follows a call for a dismantling of this system of violence with its extreme and unjust privilege. But there is a recognition of how difficult this will be with forcible repression and with a media and educational system dedicated to “lulling asleep vast strata of the population, aiming at the formation of a type of man resigned to his alienation.” The smug apologetics and cultivated ignorance of the U.S. media help to disguise our own self-interested complicity.

The generals placed in charge of these systems of institutionalized violence are encouraged by their foreign sponsors to look down on their own peoples and cultures, and

they come to think of their emulation of foreign ways as a mark of their own sophistication and superiority. The Brazilian generals describe themselves as non-partisan technocrats preserving old-time values from foreign subversion, when, in fact, they are visionless creatures of U.S. imperial policy aping their masters, subordinating the Brazilian economy and culture to precisely those external interests and disciplining mechanisms that U.S. elites prefer. The Greek colonels in the junta interlude of 1967-1973 also pretended to a technocratic and moral superiority. But while talking of “cultural purity” like their Brazilian counterparts, the Colonels placed primary emphasis on encouraging tourism, diversification via “eye-popping incentives” to foreign capital, and a huge influx of U.S. commodity-culture mix. In Brazil, “Atop a high hill dominating the quiet waters of Botafogo Bay in Rio de Janeiro stands a giant Coca Cola sign...[which] flashes its silent mockery through the long Brazilian night.”⁴⁰ These strutting bantam cocks chosen by the U.S., convinced of their own autonomy and superiority while doing their master’s bidding with brutality and ineptitude, call to mind Rostand’s Chanticleer, proud of the responsiveness of the sun each morning to his crowing command.

In contrast with this Free World scene of military elites repressing populist or mild reformist tendencies and using systematic and institutionalized terror to allow a redistribution of income upward and outward, consider North Vietnam, lost to the Free World in 1954 and thereafter under the iron grip of Communism. The failure of North Vietnamese society to show the smallest signs of disintegration under one of the most ferocious assaults in history was a puzzle to Western analysts. In seeking the “sources of strength” of the DRV in 1971, Rand specialist Konrad Kellen noted the absence of any “signs of instability,” the lack of “resort to the kind of pressure against their population in the North that might have alienated the people”; and he concluded that

the Hanoi regime is perhaps one of the most genuinely popular in the world today. The 20 million North Vietnamese, most of whom live in their agricultural cooperatives, like it there and find the system just and the labor they do rewarding.⁴¹

The contrast with Free World controlled areas of South Vietnam throughout the period of Western hegemony is startling.⁴² The difference between “our Vietnamese” and their opponents in South Vietnam was also a great puzzle to such U.S. analysts as Kennedy adviser Maxwell Taylor, later ambassador to Vietnam, who bemoaned the “national attribute” (“Asian nature” once again) which “limits the development of a truly national spirit” among the South Vietnamese, perhaps “innate” or perhaps a residue of the colonial experience, though for unexplained reasons the Vietcong showed an amazing ability “to rebuild their units and to make good their losses”—“one of the many mysteries of this

guerrilla war,” for which “we still find no plausible explanation.”⁴³ Bernard Fall, writing in the early 1960s, raised the same question and provided a partial answer:

Why is it that we must use top-notch elite forces, the cream of the crop of American, British, French, or Australian commando and special warfare schools; armed with the very best that advanced technology can provide; to defeat Viet-Minh, Algerians, or Malay ‘CT’s’ (Chinese terrorists), almost none of whom can lay claim to similar expert training and only in the rarest of cases to equality in fire power?

The answer is very simple: It takes all the technical proficiency our system can provide to make up for the woeful lack of popular support and political savvy of most of the regimes that the West has thus far sought to prop up. The Americans who are now fighting in South Vietnam have come to appreciate this fact out of first-hand experience.⁴⁴

3.4 Benign Terror

In surveying the selective concern with terror, bloodbaths, and human rights, we will focus initially on instances where attitudes in the United States have been characterized mainly by sheer indifference. The terror and violence in these cases we designate as “benign.” The reasons for the indifference, typically shared by our allies and the Communist powers as well, lie in the lack of significant community or interest group identification with the victims, or the fact that the terror is being carried out by a power whose goodwill and prosperity weigh more heavily in policy-making than mere human suffering, however large its scale. If the terror is carried out by an unfriendly state, “humanitarian concern” tends to play a larger role in expressed policy and action. Where the terror actually makes a direct contribution to *our* ends and interests, as in the case of counterrevolutionary bloodbaths that destroy radical and reformist political movements and clear the way for an “open door,” we designate the terror as “constructive” (and we shall see below that it is so treated by U.S. officials and media).

In several cases that we discuss below as “benign,” there is some kind of U.S. political-economic interest that contributes to acquiescence in terror. Real world cases rarely fall into one category exclusively, and those discussed are ones in which the indifference factor is large, although “constructive” elements sometimes affect official attitudes. The Burundi case is perhaps closest to purely benign. The East Pakistan butchery was acceptable in part because of the political “tilt” towards Pakistan by Nixon and Kissinger. The destruction of the Latin American Indians and the people of Timor has both political and economic “positive” components: the governments of the genocidal states are our friends and clients. In Latin America, the destruction of the natives (as in the United States in past centuries) is, furthermore, an aspect of economic development in which U.S. corporations are often involved, while Indonesia is one of the great prizes of the Free World in Asia.

3.4.1 East Pakistan: Tilting Towards Massacre

A revolt of the Bengalis of East Pakistan against the rule of the dominant Moslems of West Pakistan in the early 1970s led to a large-scale military effort at suppression by the West Pakistanis that quickly degenerated into a huge rape and slaughter. This terrible carnage was given considerable publicity in the West and a small segment of the U.S. public became aroused and active in opposition to U.S. policy in this area. This resulted in part from the sheer magnitude of the onslaught, which one authority described as “the most massive calculated savagery that has been visited on a civil population in recent times.”⁴⁵ For the Nixon administration, nevertheless, this was a “benign” bloodbath, and its scope and brutality failed to deter Washington from continuing military and economic aid to the government engaging in the slaughter. This was a bloodbath imposed by a friendly military elite with which U.S. authorities had a traditional affinity—“notorious in Mr. Nixon’s case” as Max Frankel pointed out⁴⁶—and U.S. policy “tilted” toward Pakistan just enough to maintain the friendly relationship with the ruling junta required by U.S. strategic planning for the Persian Gulf and South Asia.⁴⁷ Consequently the matter was regarded as “purely internal”⁴⁸ to Pakistan, the bloodbath was benign, and Washington was “not nearly so exercised about Pakistani suppression of the East Bengalis as about what they saw as Indian aggression against Pakistan.”⁴⁹

3.4.2 Burundi: “The Limitations of U.S. Power”

During the spring and summer of 1972 perhaps 250,000 people were systematically murdered in Burundi by a tribal minority government that attempted “to kill every possible Hutu male of distinction over the age of fourteen.”⁵⁰ According to an American Universities Field Staff report on Burundi, which U.S. officials judged accurate, the extermination toll included

...the four Hutu members of the cabinet, all the Hutu officers and virtually all the Hutu soldiers in the armed forces; half of Burundi’s primary school teachers; and thousands of civil servants, bank clerks, small businessmen, and domestic servants. At present (August) there is only one Hutu nurse left in the entire country, and only a thousand secondary school students survive.⁵¹

The Prime Minister of Belgium advised his cabinet as early as May, 1972 that Burundi was the scene of “veritable genocide,” and in June the term “genocide” began to appear in State Department internal memos and cables. Yet after a small news flurry in June, and speeches on the subject by Senators Kennedy and Tunney, the U.S. press and Congress lapsed into virtual silence.⁵² In confirming a new ambassador to Burundi in June, 1972, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee showed itself to be not only uninformed on the history and recent events in that country, but also quite unconcerned with the massacre.⁵³

The Carnegie Endowment study of the U.S. policy toward the Burundi massacres states that “the United States has still not uttered a single public word to describe the immensity of the crime against humanity in Burundi—or to condemn it.”⁵⁴ Although the United States buys 80 percent of the main export crop (coffee) of Burundi, at no point in the unfolding of the massacre was a threatened or actual withdrawal of this fundamental support to the massacre leadership ever considered.⁵⁵ In fact, no serious or potentially effective action was taken by the United States government, despite its detailed knowledge of events in Burundi (kept out of the public domain insofar as possible), and despite an internal memorandum prepared within the African Bureau that suggested a U.S. legal obligation to act in the face of massive abuses of human rights.⁵⁶ The Carnegie study observes that this was

...one of those rare episodes in recent American foreign policy in which the ostensible humanitarian concern of the United States had not collided with competing interests. In Bangladesh, the human disaster had been subordinated to Washington’s relationship with Pakistan and the tangled secret diplomacy with Peking. In Biafra, relief seemed choked not only by the politics of a civil war, but also by a State Department policy which placed more value on good relations with the regime in Federal Nigeria. Yet there appeared to be no comparable interests in Burundi to weigh against the human factor.⁵⁷

In the end, however, the relevant considerations were the absence of significant U.S. political or economic interests, along with “the conviction in the African Bureau that avoiding the disapproval of African States was more important than the human lives or the international legal issues in Burundi.”⁵⁸ This was an unremarkable, or benign bloodbath.

A final word of justification for the U.S. handling of the Burundi massacres was provided in an article in the *New York Times* (27 October 1974) by Thomas P. Melady, the U.S. Ambassador to Burundi. “There is no doubt about how horrible the situation was,” he observes, adding his eyewitness testimony of “trucks weighted down with bodies of Hutus, leaving the city for burial.” He praises the United States for having delivered relief supplies “in the critical first two weeks of the tragedy,” and expresses his understanding for those who thought that more might have been done: “Deep concern about stopping such a tragedy is understandable and praiseworthy,” but the critics who have accused the U.S. government of having ignored the Burundi tragedy are mistaken. The role of the U.S. as world policeman “has faded,” and it would now be improper for the U.S. “to interfere in the affairs of small states,” for example, by “boycotting trade.” Rather, “we should focus on long-term solutions and through education seek ways that will assist all people in developing nations and that will diminish the possibilities of genocide...The Burundi tragedy is a good example of the limitations of United States power.” He mentions specifically the crucial importance for human rights of developing and supporting

institutions “that will defend the rights of all men and women,” perhaps referring to our contributions to such institutional developments in Chile during the preceding year.

While U.S. actions were praiseworthy in Burundi, Melady continues, others failed in their duty, notably the United Nations and Organization of African Unity, which, by their inaction, “left themselves open to the serious charge of being selective about their concern for human rights.” But “the United States, in my opinion, followed the role of a responsible major power in the Burundi affair,” with its relief aid and “efforts to stop the killings” (which unfortunately were not successful, given the failure of others to act with comparable concern, humanity, and forthrightness); “there is no other road for a major power like the United States to follow in a world where many governments carry on repressive activities.”

These guidelines for non-intervention are, to be sure, not precisely the ones that the United States follows elsewhere in the world. One “direct action” that this humanitarian regards as inappropriate, the boycott, is employed by the United States on a vast scale (although generally for crimes against property rights); and the United States has not hesitated to offer quite vociferous words of protest when real or alleged violations of human rights take place in enemy territory. The United States has also been known to intervene occasionally to install or protect in power governments that have not thus far shown a readiness “to take the lead in the struggle against man’s inhumanity to man.”

The ambassador’s effort to “reappraise...how in today’s world of great concern for human rights such a large number of people [he offers estimates of 90,000 to 250,000] could have been liquidated without any country or organization attempting to stop the mass murder,” thus manages to evade every important point. Taken in the abstract, Ambassador Melady’s recommendations on non-intervention might merit consideration. Placed in their historical context, they reveal a startling degree of cynicism or capacity for self-deception.

3.4.3 The Indians of Latin America: The Non-Civilized in the Way of “Progress”

Commenting on the systematic massacre of the Aché Indians of Paraguay, the distinguished U.S. anthropologist Eric R. Wolf writes:

In Latin America, this battle of the civilized against the non-civilized is fought by men who classify themselves as ‘men of reason’ (*gente de razon*) against those who, bereft of that particular reason, can be classified with the animals...The progress of civilization across the face of the earth is also a process of primary accumulation, of robbery in the name of reason. Nor is this process confined to Latin America. What goes on there now is but what went on in North America when the land was “discovered” and taken from its first occupants. It is only that in North America the process has been dignified by the passage of centuries:

“dead men tell no tales.”⁵⁹

Wolf points out that “the Roman Catholic Church of Paraguay has spoken out against the genocide of the Aché and informed the Holy See” and that Paraguayan anthropologists have protested at great risk.⁶⁰ But, he goes on:

What about the Great Protestant Conscience, represented on the Guayaki reservation by the New Tribes Mission, which has seen fit to be handmaiden, gunbearer, and prison warden for the killers? What about the government of these United States, always so quick to employ the rhetoric of human rights when its interests are threatened? It gives aid to the government of Paraguay under whose aegis the campaign of extermination is being waged. Americans have good cause to listen to the Aché weeping songs. We can no longer listen to moans of the dying at Wounded Knee or of those who did not survive the Long March. But maybe there is still time to save a few Aché.⁶¹

The chances are slight. The massacre of the Aché is a case of a benign bloodbath. As Wolf notes, “Paraguay has never offered any product of interest to the growing world market, and the country has been too peripheral to be of strategic concern to any of the great powers which direct the game of international power politics.” Still, the U.S. economic and political stake in Paraguay, while not large, is growing, and easily tilts the balance in favor of indifference and apologetics where human rights violations are concerned.

Mark Münzel, a German anthropologist, was the first to call attention to the massacre of the Paraguayan Indians, with whom he lived for a year. He points out that “the Aché are inconveient”—particularly, for the few enterprises with a majority of foreign (Brazilian, United States, and Western European) shares that dominate the Paraguayan economy, and for the Stroessner dictatorship that has imposed its terrorist rule with substantial U.S. support, as did its murderous predecessors. As the forests are cleared for domestic and foreign mining and cattle-raising interests, Indian removal, using some combination of outright killing and forcible resettlement, is a normal facet of “development” policy. In the case of a “poor-man’s Nazi” regime such as Stroessner’s Paraguay, the nature of the resettlement (“comparable to those in Nazi concentration camps”⁶²) is such as to make the charge of genocide an appropriate one.

Münzel records the campaign against the Indians by manhunts, slavery, and deculturation. In manhunts with the cooperation of the military, the Indians are “pursued like animals,” the parents killed and the children sold (citing Professor Sardi). Machetes are commonly used to murder Indians to save the expense of bullets. Men not slaughtered are sold for field-workers, women as prostitutes, children as domestic servants. According to Sardi, “there is not one family in which a child has not been murdered.” The process of deculturation aims at the intentional destruction of Indian culture among those herded into

the reservation. Little effort is made to maintain secrecy about any of this, except by agencies of the U.S. government and by the U.S. media. For example, Münzel was offered teenage Indian girls by the Director of Indian Affairs of the Ministry of Defense, who “sought my good will,” and he comments that “slavery is widespread and officially tolerated.” Slaves can be found in Asunción, the capital city.⁶³

Indians who survive the manhunts are herded into reservations where, according to Münzel, they are “subjected to stress and psychological degradation calculated to break the body as well as the spirit.” Torture and humiliation of Indian chiefs is a “standard procedure designed to produce the disintegration of group identity.” Medication and nourishment are purposely withheld. When spirits are broken, the reservation is used “as a manhunt center where tamed Indians are trained in fratricide.” In a recent visit, Arens was impressed with the “striking absence of young adult males,” the horrendous condition of the children, with festering sores, distended abdomens and widespread symptoms of the protein-deficiency disease kwashiorkor, and the refusal of medication and medical care as a general and deliberate practice.⁶⁴ Arens, even on a guided tour, was aghast at the systematic maltreatment and felt himself “engulfed by the collective gloom of a people who had given up on life.”⁶⁵

The systematic humiliation and ethnocide, Münzel writes, “produces docile Indians who are sometimes taken to Asunción and exhibited to the public. Thus, the ‘good image’ of the reservation (as illustrated by the well-fed and smiling Aché photographed by a *New York Times* reporter in 1974) is preserved.” Not all reporters are so easily fooled, however. As Arens notes, contrasting the contemptible behavior of the U.S. media with the more serious treatment abroad, “where a reporter for the *New York Times* had discovered a clean reservation, peopled by smiling and happy Indians, Norman Lewis [of the *London Sunday Times*] had found a death camp.” This is also what Wolf reports in his survey and Arens found in his 1977 guided tour of the Paraguayan camps.

The reservation in question is run by U.S. fundamentalist missionaries, one of whom “has himself been observed participating in Indian hunts within the forest areas and, beyond that, in the lucrative sale of captives in his charge” (Münzel). The takeover of the extermination camp by missionaries “has meant the end of overt brutality” and the beginning of reforms which appear to be “window dressing,” Münzel reports. “Fundamentalist missionaries have followed the official line of the Paraguayan Indian Affairs Department with greater cruelty than their predecessors; they have attempted and continue to attempt to secure the rapid cultural ‘integration’ of the Aché at almost any

cost.” Their technique is “civilizing with a sledgehammer,” in the words of the Director of the South American section of the Hamburg Ethnographic Museum, who discusses their “racist feeling of superiority” and suggests that their disdain for Indian culture may be the reason why they were selected by the government to run the reservation. Indians are forced to give up their names, customs and traditions, and taught to think “that anything connected with their own culture is shameful.” For example, when a child died of hunger in a camp after capture, Münzel reports, his parents were forbidden to bury him in the forest in the traditional manner but were required to bury him close to the house in a Christian rite:

Denial of the Aché rites was seen by the Aché as compelling the spirit of the child to remain close to the house of the parents and to bring retribution to the mother should she engage in sexual intercourse with her husband. The couple, therefore, abstained from sexual relations, waiting for the chance to perform the necessary rites which had been forbidden. While attempting to maintain this abstinence, the grieving mother was repeatedly raped by the administrator and other men.

Christian values are taught in other ways as well. A Paraguayan rancher writes that he “was struck by the fear that this man inspires in these Indians,” referring to Jack Stolz of the New Tribes Mission (“the most influential of the North American Protestant missions in Paraguay”), administrator of the “Guayaki Colony” (Norman Lewis). When Stolz arrived to return a group of Indians to the reservation, “they started to run away into the forest”; women wept that they did not want to return to the camp “because there they were given no food.” Stolz proceeded to claim payment from the rancher for work done by the Indians. Other missionaries commented to Lewis that they are making good profits by the sale of Indian handicrafts produced by “the tame Makas under missionary control.” Stolz, who seemed to be “virtually a functionary of the Paraguayan government,” and who had himself participated in manhunts according to one of his colleagues, “attempted to hide the fact that the Indians were still hunted and their children enslaved,” Lewis reports after an October, 1974 trip. Stolz reported that all evidence of Indian culture had been suppressed and admitted that he had made no converts and had not learned the language: “The missionary believed that all those Indians who remained, without hope of conversion, were doomed to spend eternity in Hell”—perhaps the reason why the missionaries are preparing them with a hell on earth.

There are, however, other possible reasons for the fact that observers who do not report for the *New York Times* are reminded of “Nazi extermination centers” when they visit the missionary-run reservations. Paraguay has been a haven for escaped Nazis, including “Josef Mengele, the exterminating angel of Birkenau” (Elie Wiesel). In Argentina and Paraguay, according to Frances Grant, “The Nazis became mentors of the dictators’ prison

guards, with the local police establishments sharing an expertise won in the concentration camps of Europe.”

With a combination of Nazi advisors and racist missionaries along with the complicity of international corporations, the U.S. government and the press, the future looks bleak for the Aché. Perhaps they are the lucky ones, however. Paraguayan liberals, according to Lewis, fear that the same “or even more ruthless methods” are being extended to other regions where corporations are exploiting natural resources and “the role of North American fundamentalist missionaries in that area suggests a fate for those Indians comparable to that of the Guayakfi-Achés...”

Frances Grant, who has had a long experience in human rights affairs in Latin America, points out that “the story of the Aché Indians is the clinical microscopic study” of the “most malignant cell” in the “general examination of a diseased body”:

Even as these pages are being written, the obbligation of imprisonments and tortures goes on—priests, students, anthropologists, educators are all drawn into the maw of hidden dooming centers of interrogation or confinement...few are the families whose members have not been ravished, imprisoned, or humiliated during the course of the years that Alfredo Stroessner and his civilian and military satraps have ruled, like incubi of terror and vampirism, over their people.

The archives of human rights organizations, she notes, “overflow with contributory evidence, past and present: declarations of the tortured; futile protests to the presumed protectors of the human person, the regional and international organizations; numberless lists of the summarily imprisoned, with details of their arbitrary confinements and tortures (many since 1956 without trial); names of prisons and concentration camps, covering the country like a spider web.” Most of the stories are known through the efforts of “a few courageous protestors within Paraguay and the more than half a million refugees who keep their vigil on the borders of the neighboring countries.”

Grant finds U.S. support for the bloodier dictators “puzzling,” though she notes that “North American, British, and Dutch Oil Companies, vying for prerogatives in Latin America, found dictatorships highly amenable to their courtships.” There is nothing “puzzling” in the support of Nazi-style dictatorships by the country that has taken upon itself the international role of maintaining a favorable climate for oil companies and other corporations. The business climate of Paraguay has not been ideal, with corruption and terror of almost suffocating levels, but on such details the United States is tolerant—especially since, as Arens was informed by his hosts in Paraguay, Stroessner’s is a *very* anti-Communist regime which “tolerated no iron-curtain embassies or missions and was a haven for U.S. investment, which was not subject to the fluctuations of less carefully

regulated markets like North America.”⁶⁶ Well-taken points. Accordingly, U.S. support for Paraguayan subfascism has been dependable, with an actual spurt in aid in the liberal years of Kennedy and Johnson. Total aid from 1962-1975 aggregated \$146 million, and both military and economic aid have been allotted to this regime in the Carter “human rights” budgets. The direct aid given Paraguay by the United States has not been large, but it has had an economic and political significance not measured by the dollar totals—it constitutes a seal of approval by the U.S. government, and the granting of such an imprimatur opens up lending and grants from public and private lending institutions. It also symbolizes a supportive relationship by the United States, quite important in the case of a weak tyranny like Stroessner’s that might not last without U.S. props. This support is manifested in the extreme protectiveness of the U.S. embassy in Paraguay, the State Department and the U.S. mass media in apologizing for, and denying and suppressing information on human rights abuses in that client state.⁶⁷ Amnesty International even notes ironically that “although Stroessner has said that he considers the American Ambassador to be an exofficio member of his Cabinet, the U.S. has never officially acknowledged or taken steps to prevent the use of torture by a government which appears to be very much within its sphere of influence.”⁶⁸

In an afterword to the book he edited (see note 59), Arens notes correctly that

our ability to bend the Paraguayan government to our will by measures well short of war or threats of war is unquestioned. The silence which has enveloped the Paraguayan extermination of the Aché Indians is therefore infinitely more shameful than our failure to condemn an act of genocide in Asia and Africa.

He also notes that it is “ironic” that there has been no call to evacuate the pitiful survivors who “perish at the hands of their persecutors,” though “there are no known assassins, torturers, or other criminals among that wretched refuse of humanity” as there were, alongside of many innocent victims, among those evacuated from Vietnam. Furthermore, “United States policy in Paraguay mirrors United States policy for all of Latin America and beyond it for our other ‘spheres of influence’,” a crucial and accurate observation.

Given that U.S. influence might bring this benign bloodbath to an end, how have the government and the media reacted to the information that has been made public? Arens gives a detailed rundown. As for the government, when apprised of the arrest and torture of courageous anthropologists and others who attempted to defend the Indians, or the arrest and expulsion of priests and Protestant missionaries engaged in relief work, “it has remained silent at every official level, notwithstanding protests by private citizens and Congressmen” (as of May 1976, when the book *Genocide in Paraguay* went to press; see

note 60). Efforts by Senator James Abourezk, who noted denunciations of “Paraguay’s genocidal policies” by “European governments and their press,” while the United States is silent and continues “dumping massive amounts of foreign aid into Paraguay,” were equally unavailing. Abourezk has often been a solitary voice of conscience in the U.S. Senate, defending the rights of American Indians and others. It is small wonder that he decided not to seek office again to continue his lonely efforts.

In April, 1976, the State Department continued to refer to torture as an internal Paraguayan matter. The subsequent State Department Human Rights reports are barely more than a derisory whitewash, as is standard for U.S. domains.⁶⁹ Arens flatly asserts that the 1978 Report involves “overt fraud.” It states that a study by anthropologist Robert Smith “appears to support” its denial of the charge of genocide when Smith, in fact, claims explicitly that “genocide has occurred and is occurring,” with the Paraguayan government primarily responsible, the U.S. government serving as an accomplice.⁷⁰ It states that Arens was invited “to examine firsthand the situation of the Aché Indians” but makes no mention of his findings on this guided tour (see “Death Camps in Paraguay” and the report on his visit in *Survival International*, both published a month before the Report was submitted).

After *The Nation* had published a rare—indeed unique—article on genocide in Paraguay (24 September 1973), the State Department received an inquiry concerning the allegations in the article from the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Department replied that there had been isolated incidents and “until recently the administration of the reservation left much to be desired and the administrator was a poor choice,” but the “situation has now changed with the appointment of a new, and more suitable administration”—namely, Jack Stolz of the New Tribes Mission, whose ministrations to his charges are noted above and described in more detail in the Arens collection. The State Department further reiterated Paraguayan government denials and stated that the U.S. government does not believe “that there has been a planned or conscious effort on the part of the government of Paraguay to exterminate, molest, or harm the Aché Indians in any way.” It did not go so far as lauding Stroessner,⁷¹ who has yet to be treated like his predecessor Morínigo who was in power from 1940 to 1948 and was responsible for introducing a “nazified Paraguayan police force” among other notable contributions, and whose “final years in office were enhanced by gratifying visits to the other Americas, ending in his hearty reception in the United States and with the laurels of an honorary degree from Fordham University” (Frances Grant).

The self-censorship of the U.S. mass media neatly complements the official support of Paraguayan fascism. Arens documents the striking contrast between Western Europe, where press, radio, and TV have featured reports of Paraguayan abuses of the Indians, and the United States, where the media have imposed an almost complete blackout. Occasional reports in the *Miami Herald*, the *Missourian*, or the *Oakland Tribune* merely highlight the complicity of the national media in the massacre of the Indians; we note again Arens' crucial observation that the silence has enveloped the extermination of a people in a country very much subject to U.S. influence.

In general, apart from finding tame happy Indians in death camps, on the rare occasions when the national press has deigned to discuss the matter, it has tended to follow the State Department line: "The horror was past for all practical purposes, a new administration had taken benevolent charge of the Indian reservation, and, in effect, the good life for the Aché Indian was just beyond the next banana tree" (Arens). The national media and government maintain this pose by the simple expedience of ignoring the contrary evidence presented to them. Thus, letters to the *New York Times* by Dr. Münzel and other specialists protesting misleading coverage, including distortion of Münzel's own remarks, were not published and documentary material presented to the media or studies in the foreign press are regularly consigned to the waste basket. The press has contented itself, by and large, with silence or at most mild rebuke to the Paraguayan authorities for their past deficiencies. Religious organizations in the United States have also refused to take any action, pleading that the issue is "one of extreme delicacy" (Arens). Even condemnations of genocide in Paraguay by the Roman Catholic Church (April, May, 1974) never made it to the national media in the United States.

The Arens book, as noted, was an effort to pierce the veil of silence imposed by the media and government. The same was true of a January 3, 1978 *Survival International* document embodying Arens' report on his 1977 trip, and also a June, 1978 *Survival International* supplement on the Paraguay Indians, an early June press conference on the subject in England, and the January, 1978 article by Arens in *Inquiry* on "Death Camps in Paraguay" (see note 62). The press conference in England was covered by the British and Western European media and led to a Parliamentary debate and Resolution. The Reuters dispatch describing these events was picked up in Latin America—even in Paraguay—but it was almost totally ignored in the U.S.

One might imagine that it is the U.S. tradition of brutal maltreatment of "inconvenient natives" (merely a chapter in the sordid history of European colonial expansion), or

standard racist unconcern, that keeps the media from taking allegations of genocide seriously in U.S. domains. While there is no doubt some truth in that explanation, it is only a partial one. Thus, the *New York Times* offers front-page coverage to threats posed to native hill tribesmen in postwar Indochina, fabricating the required evidence, as we shall see below (Volume II, chapter 4). And the *Times* promptly reviews each book condemning Cambodia—though not ones that depart from the official line, as we shall see—but has yet to get around to a review of *Genocide in Paraguay*, which is ignored by the media and unknown to the reading public; total sales amount to under 2,000 copies.

The story of the Paraguayan “Guayaki” is hardly unique within U.S. domains, and, needless to say, has its analogues elsewhere, e.g., in the extermination of the aboriginal population of Tasmania. It is an important fact, however, that one is more likely to find direct reporting on benign terror in the U.S. sphere in the foreign rather than in the U.S. press. As a further example, the *London Observer* (5 March 1978) contains an extensive discussion of the fate of the Indians of Bolivia. The cover shows a photograph of a young Indian woman holding an infant with the caption: “The price of civilisation: To stay alive this Bolivian Indian sells herself at the roadside for 13p.” Other pictures show Indian slaves, “fiestas” organized by the Church “to encourage the peasants to spend their money and so keep them in a state of manageable subjection,” dying Indians in a mission compound who had their water supply cut off as a punishment, Indians at a mission camp who “appeared dazed with apathy and did not move for hours” and others who walked 250 miles in search of food and “now, in the alien urban world of the whites,...are a prey to every exploiter.”

Still other photos indicate the deeper problem: for example, a picture of a burial ground in a tin-mining town where, according to a report by a delegation of the British National Union of Mineworkers in 1977: “It is estimated that an underground tin worker contracts first degree silicosis within five years. At the age of 30 he will have second degree silicosis and by the age of 35 he will have progressed to the stage where he cannot be saved.” Or another, showing migrant cane-cutters who work a 15-hour day (13 hours on Sunday, so that they have time for purchases at the estate owner’s shop in a nearby village) with wages so low that “90 percent of workers are victims of the debt-bondage system: debts not worked off during their lifetime are passed on to their children.”

Such facts, easily documented throughout domains of the Free World, do not fall under the concept of “human rights violations” in the sense of the recent human rights campaign; to achieve this status, deaths from overwork or otherwise must be in the “right place at the

right time” (see the discussion of Cambodia, volume II, chapter 6, in particular the dismay expressed by reporters over the fact that Cambodians are alleged to work a nine-hour day in cooperatives).

The text of the *Observer* article, by Norman Lewis, explains how “the Indians of Bolivia, already exploited by a military dictatorship, will have to take up more of the white man’s burden if South African and Rhodesians accept an invitation to colonise the country” as Western civilization is driven from some of its historic conquests. Dr. Guido Strauss, Bolivian Under Secretary for Immigration, announced a plan to settle 150,000 whites from the racist regimes of Africa “financed by a 150-million-dollar credit to Bolivia offered by the Federal German Republic,” appropriately enough. He also alleged that “Britain, the U.S., and France between them were ready to put up 2,000 million dollars to indemnify white Rhodesians, ‘who would be unable to resist the process of Africanisation’.”

This “rescue effort” will no doubt be highly lauded in the West as an example of traditional Christian humanitarianism if it is conducted as Dr. Strauss outlines it. But the Catholic Church in Bolivia has a different view. A conference of religious leaders warns that the South African whites, “with their violent racial mentality,” can be expected to “import the principles of apartheid” to Bolivia, “the richest of the Latin American countries, requiring only an advanced technology for the exploitation of its raw materials” and now populated largely by those referred to disparagingly by the South Africans as “illiterate natives.” The conference cites “the contemptuous remarks of some of our own authorities who say, ‘The Indians cost more to keep than animals. They have to be fed, and work less’.”

But, Lewis continues, the Church authorities, though well-meaning, are naive, “since in some ways apartheid already exists in a purer and more extreme form in Bolivia than the version professed by the racists of South Africa,” as “a visitor to the country quickly discovers.” The Indians, he writes, “have been forcibly Christianised, and enslaved over four centuries, and they are still fantastically exploited,” though now, “with the Church turned benign, they are no longer compelled to carry priests in chairs on their backs, or scourged for persisting in their ancient worship...”

Penny Lernoux reports that 30,000 white Africans are being invited to settle in Eastern Bolivia in lands that had been earmarked for impoverished Indians, while “one-third of the Bolivian work force lives in exile because it lacks land and infrastructure—the very things the government is offering the white Africans.” Some 700,000 Bolivians have left the

country because of poverty and repression, she estimates, most of them to Argentina where they work as plantation labor. But, as Dr. Strauss explained to a U.N. Commission, his government's objective is to construct "a white Bolivia." A South African delegation meanwhile reported in the *Sunday Times* of South Africa after a visit to Bolivia that white South Africans, with their "inbred intelligence" and "racial purity," could easily take over the Bolivian economy, "run by a small minority of white immigrants from Europe who keep the Spaniards and local Indians well and truly in their place."⁷²

Dr. Strauss explained how the South African settlers will be absorbed in this "promised land" after the government develops the infrastructure in areas where they are to be settled, some of which are now occupied by Bolivian Indians. To pursue the question further, Lewis, following Strauss's suggestion, talked to the director of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), "the largest group of North American evangelical missionaries working in Bolivia," a group regarded by every Bolivian he met "as the base for operations of the CIA in Bolivia; possibly in South America itself."⁷³ The SIL is perhaps the richest and most powerful of the "North American religious bodies devoted to the spiritual advancement of South America," Lewis notes, and is supported by the government under the Ministry of Culture and Education. One of its main activities is Bible translation—with a few modifications for local consumption as when the phrase "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" becomes "Obey your legal superiors, because God has given them command."

Lewis then discusses some of the past history of spiritual advancement, for example, the description by a German anthropologist of how missionaries allowed Indians "to die in cold blood, after establishing contact with them," by holding back medicine, with the following argument: "In any case they won't allow themselves to be converted. If I baptise them just before they die, they'll go straight to heaven."

The standard missionary technique when an uncontacted group is found is to leave gifts along forest paths to draw the Indians to the mission compound, where "often at the end of a long journey, far from the Indian's source of food, his fish, his game, [the trail] comes abruptly to an end." The Indians are then taught that they must work for money on local farms and they agree, "when they realise that there's no going back," according to the head of SIL, an official of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

This official, Lewis writes, "is the first human link in the chain of a process that eventually reduces the Indians to the lamentable condition of all those we saw in Bolivia," namely, a state "too often indistinguishable from slavery." He is one of hundreds of

missionaries all over South America, “striving with zeal and with devotion to save souls whose bodies are condemned to grinding labour in an alien culture”—virtual slaves on white-owned farms or in the tin mines of the international corporations.

The North American missionaries, he continues, “have become—often officially—the servants of such right-wing military dictatorships as that of Bolivia,” which is not above sending in planes or tanks to kill those who show “too spirited a resistance to its authority,” but which generally is more “like a digesting crocodile” in a state of “watchful inactivity.” The Roman Catholic Church, after centuries of complicity in torture and oppression, is now attempting to defend the native population, as we describe further below.⁷⁴

The role of Christian missionaries in the historical and current practice of Western expansion is interesting and complex, not only in Latin America. The ideological commitments that lie behind it are sometimes remarkable. Evidently, missionary activities will be facilitated, in general, by the success of Western penetration, military and otherwise. This fact is sometimes interpreted in terms of fundamentalist doctrine. Consider, for example, the following comments on Southeast Asia in the journal *Translation of the Wycliffe Bible Translators* (closely linked if not virtually identical to SIL):

God uses military troops, but He has other methods also. God turned the tables in Indonesia on the eve of a Marxist revolution, and the spiritual response of thousands turning to Christ has been tremendous. Cambodia put all missionaries out of their country in 1965, and it seemed God’s work there was finished. Suddenly—a coup d’etat and a new responsiveness to missionary work...

We are looking to God for the purchase of new headquarters in Saigon and trusting Him for advance into Cambodia and other new tribes as He leads...⁷⁵

God’s work, in the case of Indonesia in 1965, included the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people; the missionaries’ reference to this spiritual achievement recalls the comments of the “moderate scholars” of Freedom House on the “dramatic changes” that had proven so beneficial in Indonesia as the massacre was consummated, sure evidence that the United States was on the right track—perhaps on God’s side—in Vietnam (see p. 98, above). And God’s agents in Indochina turn out to be the avenging angels of the U.S. Air Force. Small wonder that whatever their private goals and individual justifications, the fundamentalist missionaries so often find themselves accomplices in ethnocide or even genocide.

Indians who attempt to resist white depredations are captured and tortured by police, Lewis continues. Those “who have only recently been driven or enticed from the jungle...

are at the bottom of the pyramid of enslavement,” even below those forced to labor as virtual slaves on farms and in mines. After passing through the mission, where they have “been deprived of their skills and been taught the power of money,” they are forced into slavery to subsist or must sell their women for food. Lewis visited a mission where the scene “was a depressingly familiar one: the swollen bellies, pulpy, inflated flesh, toothless gums and chronic sores of malnutrition, the slow listless movements, the eyes emptied by apathy,” with no edible food visible and with the water supply “cut off by the missionary in punishment for some offence,” as shown in the accompanying pictures: “The Indians, several of them ill, and with sick children in the camp, had been without water for two days.” The missionary in charge confirmed the collective punishment, ordered after two or three children had broken into a store. Water would be withheld, he said, until the culprits were found “and brought into his compound, there to be publicly thrashed.” He deplored the fact that “the conception of corrective chastisement seemed to be beyond their grasp.” The missionary “spoke of this aversion to punishment as of some genetic defect inherited by the whole race.” The chief of the captured tribe, “grotesque in his dignity,” attempted suicide with an axe.

Elsewhere, Indians give away their children—usually girls—to white families in the hope that at least they may be saved, though a form of slavery is the common lot. These children are the “untouchables of Latin America, whose existence went unnoticed,” though this form of slavery is “barely disguised” and causes no particular response among the civilized whites—the “men of reason”—who are now accustomed to the practice.

Many of the leading citizens are Germans, “the most successful and affluent of the foreigners in Bolivia,” who are now committed to bringing in South Africans to displace the native population, as discussed above. Many remain loyal Nazis, Lewis reports. Lewis attended a fund-raising dinner for a German school, where “many of the guests were ex, or actual, Nazis.” What he found “most extraordinary...was to be assured that German Jews in Bolivia had sunk their differences with their old Aryan persecutors, and now fraternised at such gatherings, joining the chorus of ‘Horst Wessel’ along with the rest; a case of cultural solidarity in an alien background overcoming even racial prejudice.” “Cultural solidarity,” in this case, is buttressed by the economic opportunities afforded by the rich resources that await exploitation when the Indians are sufficiently christianized by the missions that are devoted to this task.

Lewis concludes with the following observation:

Together with the powerful German-Dutch minority already in place, these newcomers [from South Africa] could transform Bolivia into a strong white-dominated, ultra-right, anti-Communist state in the heart of Latin

America. This vigorous transformation would discourage the future covetousness of neighbouring states, and it would delight the United States by laying forever the ghost of Che Guevara—himself once attracted to empty spaces in Bolivia.

There, Guevara was killed by the CIA and local authorities, after an abortive and ill-conceived effort to organize the native population to better their lot.

It is perhaps too much to say that the United States is delighted by the extermination, enslavement, and torture of the native populations and their replacement by Nazis and racists who can serve more effectively the needs of the industrial democracies. Rather, it is a matter of no particular moment, worthy of no protest, no display of the kind of emotion reserved for Russian dissidents, and deserving no comment in the nation's press.

Turning once again to the State Department's Human Rights reports, we discover (March, 1977) that "most Bolivians enjoy a relatively orderly and peaceful society and are normally secure from abuses" although "despite significant progress over the past generation, however, a majority of the people are still not protected from occasional infringement of the right to life on the part of military and security forces" (the "most recent example" was January, 1974). Meanwhile the country is "currently experiencing a period of relatively rapid economic growth." There were cases of inhuman treatment in earlier years, but thankfully things have improved as President Banzer assures us that his government will remain in power "in order to continue its avowed program of nation-building, economic development and internal political stabilization"—who could doubt his word? Needless to say, there is no mention of the situation described by anthropologists, the local Catholic church, or European reporters.

The 1978 Human Rights Report is no less cheery in tone. It tells us of "a series of significant improvements in the status of human rights" along with economic progress that "has also undoubtedly improved the situation of some of the poorest segments of Bolivian society and contributed to the economic and social cohesion of this country." Again, the material just reviewed has somehow escaped the assiduous researchers of the State Department, even though their commitment to human rights is so intense and single-minded as to have come under sharp attack from realistic liberals such as Joseph Kraft, who warns that the United States does not "have the luxury of sniffing at corruption" or "playing liberal missionary on human rights" or "being a supersleuth on weapon sales."⁷⁶

The *London Sunday Times* carried a lengthy illustrated report on the situation of the Indians in Brazil, where a population of 3 million at the time of the white conquest has been reduced to less than 100,000 by "disease, alcohol and demoralisation" (Brian Moynahan, "The Last Frontier," 18 June 1978). Sometimes they are simply murdered, by

the traditional method of offering them blankets infected with smallpox or sugar laced with arsenic, or by the more modern technique of dropping dynamite sticks from planes. Or they are treated by missionaries and others to the civilizing process already described. In Brazil, too, the German community has achieved high rank in both numbers and investment. Many immigrants have recently left Europe, which they describe as “a continent submerged in decadence and Socialism.” In this group, for example, is a former French Army sergeant from Africa who manages a Brazil nut plantation and says forthrightly: “Je suis raciste...The Brazilians are white niggers. Not a thought for tomorrow, all rhythm and shit. They’re kids. You’ve got to push them...The Amazon is white man’s country. Any European winds up boss.” Not like France, where “some day some Arab will wind up President.”

Settlers explain that it is easy to remove the Indians from their (in theory) inalienable lands: “‘Hell, man, banana his friends off.’ Which means a couple of aerial bombardments with dynamite sticks.” A rancher adds: “Don’t get me wrong. I’m Christian. I don’t think the only good Indian is a dead Indian, like the Yanks say. But I do believe that the only good Indian is a landless one.” A Canadian missionary predicts “total extinction” for the Indians, with the Army moving in for the kill, for development—though Moynahan comments that Brazil is showing a degree of “restraint and decency not paralleled by any other New World country at the height of its venture into the interior and certainly not by the British in Australia”—small comfort.

Moynahan, quite typically, explains the extermination of the Indians in terms of historical inevitability: “What happens on the frontier is harsh, the cruelty unplanned but present. It would be unrealistic, in the face of history, for it to be anything else.” Others disagree. Shelton H. Davis, in a study of development and the Indians of Brazil, concludes that “the massive amount of disease, death, and human suffering unleashed upon Brazilian Indians in the past few years is a direct result of the economic development policies of the military government of Brazil,” and more generally, the private, state and multinational corporations that have taken over the Brazilian economy, particularly since the U.S.-backed coup of 1964.⁷⁷ He notes as well that this particular version of “economic progress,” which is far from inevitable, has also led to the victimization of agricultural workers, rural migrants from the poverty-stricken Northeast, and millions of urban poor. He describes the history of extermination of Brazilian Indians on the North American pattern to permit Western colonization, and the failure of attempts to save them from the worst depredations of the advancing “men of reason.” From 1900 to 1957, he estimates, the indigenous population of Brazil dropped from 1 million to less than 200,000, and by

the latter date many “were enduring the most precarious conditions of life in the greatest misery” (p. 7, citing a Brazilian anthropologist). Hideous atrocities came to light in 1968 when a government commission released a 5,000 page report documenting “widespread corruption and sadism” and the use of biological as well as conventional weapons to wipe out Indian tribes (deliberate spread of smallpox, tuberculosis, measles, etc.; p. 10f.) He reviews Norman Lewis’ study in the *London Sunday Times* (February 1969), entitled “Genocide—From Fire and Sword to Arsenic and Bullets, Civilization Has Sent Six Million Indians to Extinction.” Again it is to the European press that one must turn for serious current discussions.

The main point that Davis is concerned to stress is that the destructive policy toward the Brazilian Indians and the maltreatment of the Brazilian poor in general are elements of a specific program of development keyed to the needs of the domestic and foreign elites who dominate Brazilian policy. He notes that with the coup of 1964 “a new partnership has emerged in Brazil between international lending institutions, multinational corporations, and the Brazilian military regime” (p. 42). This partnership has greatly speeded up an export-oriented development strategy that runs roughshod over any obstructive weak elements in society. Thus the Indian regulatory body “was forced to sacrifice Indian land rights for the larger economic interests of state highway programs, large-scale mining prospects, and agri-business enterprises in the Amazon. Such wanton dispossession of native lands had led to the uprooting and destruction of scores of Indian tribes.” This process has greatly disturbed some of those who have tried to defend the Indians, for example Antonio Cotrim Soares, “one of Brazil’s most dedicated Indian agents,” who resigned from the Brazilian National Indian Foundation in 1972 because, he said, “I am tired of being a grave-digger of the Indians...I do not intend to contribute to enrichment of economic groups at the cost of the extinction of primitive cultures” (p. 68).

The “global pattern of ethnic destruction that since 1970 has encompassed the entire Amazon region of Brazil” (p. 73), Davis argues, is related to a program of extraction of natural resources that will offer little benefit to the mass of the Brazilian population, though it will enrich a few and will serve the needs of the industrial countries. If workers are forced to live in “slave camps,” in the phrase of a Catholic Bishop describing immigrants brought in from impoverished areas (p.122), the reason is not historic inevitability any more than the continuing massacre of Indians is an inexorable process of history. Citing the same Bishop, Davis notes that “if the incentives given to the oligarchies and trusts from the south of the country had been invested in the peasantry of the country, a very different set of events would have occurred... ‘Such investment could have

produced a future of hope and development for all of these people in the interior of Brazil, rather than perpetuate the inequities of the latifundia system which is socially and radically unjust” (p. 126).

The actual policies pursued, while benefiting a traditional and foreign elite, are not only destroying the Indians but are severely damaging the Brazilian peasant small-holders and agricultural workers and have, in fact “worsened the already severe pattern of hunger and malnourishment that characterizes the majority of the population of Brazil” (pp. 126, 132). According to Davis:

One of the major results of this new settlement pattern has been the uprooting of large numbers of poor Brazilian peasants who previously formed the pioneer element in central Brazil. It must be stated categorically that the land-tenure situation of these peasant small-holders is no less precarious than that of Indian groups in the Amazon basin. In addition, all attempts to seek legal protection for the land claims of these peasant populations, on the part of such institutions as the Brazilian Catholic Church, have been met by severe repression on the part of local, state, and national officials in Brazil.⁷⁸ As a result, over the past decade, agrarian protest and violence have reached epidemic proportions in several areas of Mato Grosso and central Brazil. (p. 161)

But there is more to say about what Davis calls the “silent war...being waged against aboriginal peoples, innocent peasants, and the rain forest ecosystem in the Amazon Basin of South America” (p. 167). While it may benefit Western capitalism in the short term, a serious ecological disaster may be in the making. Commercial exploitation of the Amazon is disturbing a fragile ecological system with significant potential effects even on the oxygen content of the earth’s atmosphere, given the magnitude of the Amazon Basin forests, which are estimated to contain about one-third of the trees on the earth’s surface. The matter is poorly understood and is not a consideration within the framework of capitalist development programs.

The director of Brazil’s National Institute for Amazon Research suggested recently that the surviving Indians of the Amazon region may be the only ones who know the answer: “We regard the Indian,” he stated, “as an inferior being with an inferior culture. But when you talk about living in the Amazon he is far superior because he harmonizes so perfectly with the whole ecological system... The tragedy is that the Indian is one of the main keys to the successful occupation of the Amazon, and as he disappears his vast knowledge is going with him.”⁷⁹

Perhaps the native Americans will yet witness a grim harvest reaped by the “men of reason.”

3.4.4 East Timor: Genocide on the Sly

We conclude this survey of selected benign bloodbaths by shifting to a different area of

the world, Southeast Asia.

On December 7, 1975, Indonesian armed forces invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, only a few hours after the departure of President Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger from a visit to Jakarta. Although Indonesia has effectively sealed off East Timor from the outside world, reports have filtered through indicating that there have been massive atrocities, with estimates running to 100,000 killed, about one-sixth of the population. An assessment by the Legislative Research Service of the Australian Parliament concluded that there is “mounting evidence that the Indonesians have been carrying out a brutal operation in East Timor,” involving “indiscriminate killing on a scale unprecedented in post-World War 2 history.” We will return to the evidence, which compares very well in credibility with what is available concerning other areas of the world closed to direct investigation where atrocities have been alleged; Cambodia, to take an obvious parallel in the same time frame.

It is instructive to compare Western reaction to these two instances of reported bloodbaths. In the case of Cambodia reported atrocities have not only been eagerly seized upon by the Western media but also embellished by substantial fabrications—which, interestingly, persist even long after they are exposed. The case of Timor is radically different. The media have shown no interest in examining the atrocities of the Indonesian invaders, though even in absolute numbers these are on the same scale as those reported by sources of comparable credibility concerning Cambodia, and relative to the population, are many times as great. Nevertheless, apart from Australia, and to a lesser degree, the Netherlands, the Western reaction has been almost total silence. In the United States, lack of concern has been coupled with some show of hostility to the bearers of unwelcome tidings. On the rare occasions when the press deals with Timor it generally presents as fact the latest handout of the Indonesian propaganda agencies, as we shall see, or else reports the iniquity of the resistance, compliments of Indonesian generals. The State Department observes the same conventions.

The difference in international responses is revealing. Specifically, it reveals once again how hypocritical is much of the “human rights” clamor in the West. The difference reflects the concern of ideologues to divert attention to the crimes of enemies of the state they serve, while obscuring atrocities for which they share a measure of responsibility. The major point we wish to emphasize is that the United States and its allies are participants in the Timor massacres through the agency of the regime they support in Jakarta. The United States could have prevented the invasion and might have used its

influence (and still can) to bring the subsequent atrocities to an end, while in Cambodia, where much of the post-1975 suffering has been a direct consequence of U.S. barbarity in the recent past, the vast outpouring of indignation in the West was unlikely to have a positive effect in improving the lot of victims of barbarism or oppression. From this simple observation, as obvious as it is ignored, we learn something about the sudden concern for “human rights” that has moved to stage center just at the moment when the lustre of classical colonialist and interventionist ideologies has dimmed.

In the next chapter we will turn to United States relations with Indonesia, which provide the framework for understanding the attitude that the U.S. government and the Free Press have taken with regard to Indonesian aggression in East Timor. The crucial event was the military coup of October, 1965, which had two major consequences regarded with much admiration in the West: first, Indonesia rejoined the Free World as a fully-accredited member, a paradise for investors, free to be plundered by the industrial societies and its own rulers on a joint venture basis; second, the mass-based Communist party, which had posed a barrier to the kind of freedom offered to the underdeveloped world by the industrial West, was destroyed with the incidental murder of hundreds of thousands of people. Since recording these achievements, the military government of Indonesia has been the beneficiary of the full range of support from the United States: military, economic, diplomatic and ideological. In particular, the U.S. government has not only provided its Indonesian client with the material means to conduct its programs of pillage, oppression and massacre, but has also exerted strenuous efforts to obscure them, with the loyal assistance of the Free Press. We will see many examples as we turn to the Indonesian aggression in East Timor, but it is important to be aware of the more general context.

Before turning to the direct consequences of the Indonesian invasion, a few words of background.[80](#)

The island of Timor was a region of conflict between Dutch and Portuguese imperialism until 1904 when the Luso-Hollandesa treaty assigned East Timor to the Portuguese empire and West Timor to the Dutch. A rebellion against the Portuguese was quelled with over 3,000 Timorese killed in 1912, after two years of bitter fighting. During World War II, “intervention by Australian and Dutch troops, and finally by Japanese forces plunged East Timor into the war, and inevitable occupation by the Japanese” (*Dunn Report*). Australian commandos resisted for over a year, attributing their success to support from the Timorese in the mountains, where most of the population lives. “During

the Second World War the few towns of Timor and many of the villages were either destroyed or badly damaged, largely as a result of Allied bombing” (*Dunn Report*). Portuguese authorities estimated the number of Timorese who died at over 50,000. In contrast, the Australian commando force of 400 suffered 40 deaths (Jolliffe, p. 46).

Indonesian independence did not affect the Portuguese colony of East Timor, which remained a backwater, undeveloped apart from some improvement in the few towns (primarily the capital city of Dili), where the economy was largely in the hands of Chinese. The Church had long cooperated with the imperial power. “Critics of the Church, among them the Jesuits and other missionaries, sometimes observed that the Church in Timor seemed to concentrate more on helping its flock to come to terms with their plight rather than on pressing for social reforms”(*Dunn Report*), a typical colonial manifestation. “In all Portuguese colonies the Catholic Church had been the linchpin of Portugal’s ‘civilizing mission’,” recognized in the Portuguese Constitution as one of the “centres for spreading civilisation” (Jolliffe, p. 93). The same was true throughout the Spanish and French colonial systems.

For the people of Timor, colonialism was a disaster. The slave trade flourished under the Dutch as well as the Portuguese until well into the nineteenth century. In 1947 representatives of the Australian government observed “forced labour under the whip... from dawn to dusk” as the Portuguese “live with the same mixture of civility and brutality as they had 350 years ago.” An Australian journalist visiting in 1963 wrote that “I have never been so sensible of fear-paralysed hostility as I was in Timor” (Jolliffe, pp. 47, 55).

East Timor was never included within the colonial or post-colonial boundaries of Indonesia and “Indo-Javanese and Islamic influences barely can be noted.”⁸¹ After World War II, mountain people “have proclaimed repeatedly their right to self-determination” and eagerly welcomed the steps toward independence which followed the 1974 Portuguese revolution.⁸²

As soon as the Portuguese announced that independence would be granted to the colonies in April, 1974, the tiny elite of Timor (numbering perhaps 3,000) formed three political parties (and later, a few minor parties): UDT, FRETILIN, and APODETI. “Among the founders of the UDT were mainly Timorese who had benefited from Portuguese rule” (Hill), including several leaders associated with the fascist parties in Portugal. The UDT is described by Forman as “the offshoot of the old colonial administrative class.”⁸³ “The UDT leadership predominantly comprised Catholics who were smallholders or administrative officials” (Jolliffe, p. 62). Initially regarded as the

most influential of the three parties, “its lack of positive policies, its associations with the ‘ancien regime,’ together with its initial reluctance to support the ultimate goal of full independence led many of the party’s original followers to swing their support to FRETILIN which by early 1975 was generally considered to have become the largest party in the Territory.”⁸⁴ The reasons for the swing were not only the failures of the UDT but also the successes of FRETILIN. “The UDT’s inability to articulate a programme of social development or build links with the common people in the hinterland could not provide serious opposition to the FRETILIN literacy and agricultural development campaign” (Jolliffe, p. 90). One Australian journalist estimated in February, 1975 that the UDT had the support of about 10 percent of the population and FRETILIN about 60 percent, while about 25 percent “are thought to be too remote, illiterate or apolitical to take part in an election.”⁸⁵ The remaining 5 percent were said to support the pro-Indonesian party APODETI, a common estimate.

FRETILIN was a moderate reformist national front, headed by a Catholic seminarian and initially involving largely urban intellectuals, among them young Lisbon-educated radical Timorese who “were most eager to search for their cultural origins” and who were “to lead the FRETILIN drive into the villages, initiating consumer and agricultural co-operatives, and a literary campaign conducted in [the native language] along the lines used by Paulo Freire in Brazil” (Jolliffe, p. 69). It was “more reformist than revolutionary,” calling for gradual steps towards complete independence, agrarian reform, transformation of uncultivated land and large farms to people’s cooperatives, educational programs, steps towards producer-consumer cooperatives supplementing existing Chinese economic enterprises “for the purposes of supplying basic goods to the poor at low prices,” controlled foreign aid and investment, and a foreign policy of nonalignment.⁸⁶

The third party, APODETI, “apparently attracted little support and has generally been regarded as the smallest of the three political parties to have emerged by May, 1974.”⁸⁷ It was the only party calling for union with Indonesia. Its “social base tended to be anti-white and anti-Portuguese, drawing support from conservative full-blooded Timorese Catholics (including some priests), a section of conservative tribal leaders and the majority of the small Timorese Moslem community” (Jolliffe, p. 82). Its president, Arnaldo dos Reis Araújo, was a Japanese collaborator jailed after the war,⁸⁸ and was selected by the Indonesian invaders to head the Quisling regime that they instituted in East Timor after the December, 1975 invasion.⁸⁹

In January, 1975, the UDT and FRETILIN formed a coalition, which collapsed when

the UDT withdrew in May. In August the UDT staged a coup, setting off a bloody conflict that ended a few weeks later in a complete victory for FRETILIN. According to an assessment made by a team of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (AFCOA) which visited East Timor in October 1975, between 2,000 and 3,000 people lost their lives in the civil war, most of them in the area around the central mountain zone.⁹⁰ The figures are worth noting, since the United States, after reports of later Indonesian atrocities began to surface, has tried to claim that many of those killed were victims of the civil war.

One major factor in FRETILIN success, apart from popular support, was that the small Timorese military forces trained by the Portuguese were pro-FRETILIN, and indeed were initially confined to barracks by the Portuguese for this reason. At the time of the coup, the Portuguese appear to have aided the UDT, arresting FRETILIN leaders. An Australian pilot, who seems to be a major source for tales of FRETILIN atrocities circulated by Indonesia and the United States, flew men and guns for the UDT and dropped what he called “improvised bombs” on Dili.⁹¹ What reached the international press was largely the version approved by Indonesia, which “had the monopoly on information from the territory” (Hill, p. 12; see below for many examples). Foreign visitors later “found that there had been considerably less fighting than had been reported and less people killed” (Hill, p. 12). Dunn and Jolliffe report exactly the same thing.

The handling of the reports by the first foreign visitors after the brief civil war gives a revealing insight into the nature of the news management that has since then prevailed in the United States. The *New York Times* published an account written by Gerald Stone, “an Australian television journalist, who is believed to be the first reporter allowed there since the fighting began” (4 September 1975). In fact, the *Times* story is revised and excerpted from a longer report carried by the *London Times* (2 September 1975). The *New York Times* revisions are instructive.

A major topic of Stone’s *London Times* story is his effort to verify reports of large-scale destruction and atrocities, attributed primarily to FRETILIN by Indonesian propaganda and news coverage based on it, then and since. These reports, he writes,

had been filtered through the eyes of frightened and exhausted evacuees or, worse, had come dribbling down from Portuguese, Indonesian, and Australian officials, all of whom had reason to distrust FRETILIN.

Here are his major conclusions:

Our drive through Dili quickly revealed how much distortion and exaggeration surrounds this war. The city has been taking heavy punishment, with many buildings scarred by bullet holes, but all the main ones are standing. A hotel that was reported to have been burnt to the ground was there with its windows shattered, but otherwise intact...

Undoubtedly there have been some large-scale atrocities on both sides. Whether they were calculated atrocities, authorized by Fretilin or UDT commanders, is another question. Time after time, when I tried to trace a story to its source, I found only someone who had heard it from someone else. Strangely, it is in the interest of all three governments—Portuguese, Indonesian and Australian, to make the situation appear as chaotic and hopeless as possible...*In that light, I am convinced that many of the stories fed to the public in the past two weeks were not simply exaggerations; they were the product of a purposeful campaign to plant lies* (our emphasis).

Stone implicates all three governments in this propaganda campaign.

Of the material just quoted, here is what survives editing in the *New York Times*:

A drive through Dili showed that the city had taken heavy punishment from the fighting. All the main buildings were standing but many were scarred with bullet holes.

Stone's conclusions about the purposeful lies of Indonesian and Western propaganda are totally eliminated, and careful editing has modified his conclusion about the scale of the destruction. What the *New York Times* editors did retain was Stone's description of prisoners on burial detail, the terrible conditions in FRETILIN hospitals (the Portuguese had withdrawn the sole military doctor; there were no other doctors—cf. Hill, p. 13), "evidence of beating" (this is the sole subheading in the article), and other maltreatment of prisoners by FRETILIN.

The process of creating the required history advances yet another step in the *Newsweek* account of Stone's *New York Times* article (International Edition, 15 September 1975). *Newsweek* writes that "the devastation caused by rival groups fighting for control of Timor is clearly a matter of concern," a comment that is interesting in itself, in view of the lack of concern shown by *Newsweek* for the real bloodbath since the Indonesian invasion. *Newsweek* then turns to "an account of the bloodbath written by Gerald Stone" in the *New York Times*. After quoting the two sentences cited above on the "drive through Dili," *Newsweek* continues:

Stone went on to report seeing bodies lying on the street and many badly injured civilians who had gone without any medical treatment at all.⁹² He also revealed that the Marxist Fretilin party had driven the moderate Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) out of the capital and in the process had captured and systematically mistreated many UDT prisoners...Stone's dispatch supported the stories of many of the 4,000 refugees who have already fled Timor.

From this episode we gain some understanding of the machinations of the Free Press. A journalist visits the scene of reported devastation and atrocities by "the Marxist Fretilin party" (cf. note 86) and concludes that the reports are largely false, in fact, in large measure propaganda fabrications. After a skillful re-editing job by the *New York Times* that eliminates his major conclusion and modifies others, *Newsweek* concludes that he found that the reports were true. Thus the required beliefs are reinforced: "Marxist" terrorists are bent on atrocities, and liberation movements are to be viewed with horror.

And the stage is set for general acquiescence when U.S.-backed Indonesian military forces invade to “restore order.”⁹³

The background for the UDT August coup seems to lie primarily in the erosion of support for the UDT during 1975 as FRETILIN extended its social and political activities throughout the territory, efforts not duplicated by the UDT.⁹⁴ The chief of the Portuguese political affairs bureau “said he thought that UDT had been told by the Indonesians that the only way they could be independent would be to establish an anti-communist country” (Hill, p. 11). Just prior to the coup, high-level meetings had been held in Jakarta and Kupang (capital of Indonesian West Timor). After the Kupang meeting, UDT President Lopes da Cruz said: “We are realists. If we want to be independent we must follow the Indonesian political line. Otherwise it is independence for a week or a month.”⁹⁵ The Indonesians had made it clear that they would tolerate no “radicalism” in East Timor and only Indonesian-style “independence.” “In an interview recently a source close to Lieut. Gen. Ali Murtopo, President Suharto’s principal troubleshooter, said: ‘Integration into Indonesia is the best solution. Independence has no chance. It is too weak and small and will create a problem for us in the future. If it becomes radical we will take care of it.’”⁹⁶ In his congressional testimony, Benedict Anderson stated that “my understanding is that the situation which precipitated the civil war in East Timor was a coup by the UDT, which was instigated by Indonesian intelligence,” referring to the August coup.⁹⁷ This seems to be the general view among qualified observers. Declining in internal strength, UDT leaders appear to have concluded that their only hope for power lay in associating themselves with Indonesia’s drive for dominance.

Shortly after the UDT coup, the Portuguese sent a peacekeeping mission to try to prevent civil struggle, but they were unable to reach East Timor because of Indonesian obstruction. It was only after a formal protest by Portugal that a Portuguese peace-maker was permitted to arrive in the area, after full-scale fighting had begun (Jolliffe, pp. 124-5). Again, this would seem to indicate that the Indonesians may have been hoping that civil strife would provide them with an excuse for intervention.

The colonial administration departed just prior to the FRETILIN victory in September, “taking with them the only remaining doctor and a large supply of the colony’s food, and leaving behind an administrative vacuum which was filled by FRETILIN” (Hill, p. 13), which received no material assistance from outside. Indonesia refused entry to journalists from their side of the border, but from mid-September to the Indonesian invasion of December there were accredited Australian journalists present and also Australian visitors.

The Western press outside of Australia again tended to rely on Indonesian sources, while the U.S. State Department claims (and reveals) ignorance, as we shall see.

The Australians who were in East Timor have given quite a favorable account of the brief interlude of semi-independence from September to the Indonesian invasion of December 7. Dunn, who led the Australian aid mission in October, wrote on the basis of his visit that:

The Fretilin administration was surprisingly effective in re-establishing law and order, and in restoring essential services to the main towns. By mid-October, Dili was functioning more or less normally and the Chinese shops were beginning to re-open. The towns and villages visited by the ICRC [International Red Cross] and ACFOA [Australian aid mission] members reflected an overall improvement in the situation... The Fretilin administration had many shortcomings, but it clearly enjoyed widespread support from the population, including many hitherto UDT supporters. In October, Australian relief workers visited most parts of Timor and, without exception, they reported that there was no evidence of any insecurity or any hostility towards Fretilin. Indeed, Fretilin leaders were welcomed warmly and spontaneously in all main centres by crowds of Timorese. In my long association with Portuguese Timor, which goes back some 15 years, I had never before witnessed such demonstrations of spontaneous warmth and support from the indigenous population.⁹⁸

Other visitors gave similar reports. Testifying before the UN Security Council in April, 1976, Ken Fry, Labor member of the Australian Parliament who visited the territory in mid-September, found it at peace apart from some border clashes with forces operating from Indonesian West Timor:

We found the FRETILIN administration to be responsible and moderate and it obviously enjoyed strong support from the East Timorese people. The prisoners were being well cared for and it is worth noting that the prisoners included some FRETILIN supporters who had been apprehended for breaches of discipline...⁹⁹ Although the FRETILIN administration faced serious supply and economic problems, order had been restored and the people were going back to the villages to tend their crops. The civil war had ended....Like all other Australians who visited Portuguese Timor during this period, I came away full of admiration for the Central Committee of the FRETILIN party. I was tremendously impressed by their moderation, by their integrity and by their intelligence in dealing with a very difficult situation.¹⁰⁰

Jill Jolliffe, who was working at the time as a journalist in East Timor, describes the FRETILIN program, as it was evolving during this period, in the following terms:

Most observers of the FRETILIN administration in the last months of 1975 are generally agreed that there was nothing to suggest that an independent East Timor under FRETILIN would have been other than a moderate government pursuing a foreign policy of non-alignment and regional co-operation. Its programme of social reform is moderate, based principally on establishment of agrarian co-operatives (rather than land expropriation) and mass education. Its hallmarks are fervent nationalism, populism, political pragmatism, and while FRETILIN thinking has been stamped in the mould of Third World nationalism rather than western social democracy, the future of an independent East Timor would lie open to political change (p. 298; cf. p. 193f).

“Throughout this period FRETILIN repeatedly requested foreign governments, particularly those of neighbouring countries, to send observers and fact-finding missions to East Timor to ascertain the situation in the Territory” (*Decolonization*, p. 25). They refused on the grounds that Portugal retained sovereignty. Until mid-November

FRETILIN leaders requested that Portuguese authorities return to the territory to resume and complete the process of decolonization (*Dunn Report*, p. 70).

It might be noted, at this point, that Indonesia had previously indicated its support for independence of Timor. In a letter of June 17, 1974, to José Ramos-Horta of FRETILIN, Foreign Minister Adam Malik of Indonesia wrote that the Portuguese change of government offers “a good opportunity to the people of Timor to accelerate the process towards independence” and stated that the Government of Indonesia adheres to the following principle: “The independence of every country is the right of every nation, with no exception [sic] for the people in Timor.” He also stated that Indonesia had no designs on the Territory.¹⁰¹ Dunn was present in Dili when Ramos-Horta of FRETILIN returned from Jakarta with the Malik letter, believing that the prospects were so good that his party might consider “conceding foreign affairs and defence powers to Indonesia.”¹⁰²

The facts proved to be quite different. With the victory of FRETILIN in the civil war, Indonesia at once began its armed intervention on the pretext of assisting anti-FRETILIN Timorese, a pretense which, as we will see, is generally accepted in the West, though it has absolutely no basis in fact, so far as we can determine. Indonesian border raids began on September 14; an Indonesian corporal captured during these raids said that he had crossed the border as part of a task force on September 9 (Jolliffe, p. 146). Indonesian attacks continued, reaching a significant level when a force of about 2,000 Indonesians along with some 80 Timorese in support roles attacked and captured the town of Balibó about 10 km. from the border on October 16. In the course of this attack 5 Australian newsmen died, an event which caused some uproar in Australia as evidence of Indonesian responsibility began to mount. A few days later Dunn observed an Indonesian warship “shelling positions well within Fretilin territory to the East of Balibó, near the Loes River. Throughout October and November heavy hand-to-hand fighting took place between Fretilin and Indonesian troops, and gradually the Indonesian forces were able to establish control over much of the territory to the west of the Loes River.”¹⁰³

Like Hill (see above), Dunn points out that during this period the foreign press (at times including *Pravda*) relied heavily on Indonesian reports (p. 80). Jolliffe, one of the few journalists actually working in East Timor during this period, also comments on “the incidence of false reports, many of which were carried uncritically in the Australian and international press,” from Indonesian sources, particularly after the fall of Balibó (p. 198). In mid- and late-November Indonesian military activity increased; heavy supporting fire from artillery and naval vessels as well as use of aircraft was observed and reported by

Australian journalists Michael Richardson and Jill Jolliffe.^{[104](#)}

Fighting in the border areas increased after the Indonesian capture of Balibó, though there were no new Indonesian offensives. Indonesian naval bombardment continued in November. On November 14, Indonesian naval forces began bombarding the town of Atabae, which had become the front line after the fall of Balibó to the Indonesian invaders. The Australian journalist Roger East, later killed at the time of the December 7 invasion, observed regular air attacks some 30 km. inland from Atabae at this time. “After fourteen days of intense aerial and sea bombardment Atabae fell to Indonesian occupation at 7 a.m. on 28 November.”^{[105](#)} The air and naval bombardment was also witnessed by Michael Richardson.^{[106](#)}

These attacks evidently convinced FRETILIN leaders that Indonesia was determined to invade. Appeals for a negotiated settlement by FRETILIN and Portuguese officials had been rejected by Indonesia, and FRETILIN leaders were coming to believe “that Portugal and Australia, the only third parties showing an interest in the conflict in Timor, could not or would not take steps to deter Indonesia from attaining her objective by military means” (*Dunn Report*, p. 81). In this context, FRETILIN declared the independence of East Timor, which it had been governing for almost three months, on November 28.

A full-scale Indonesian invasion was generally expected at this point. Australia instructed all nationals to leave on December 2. “It was clear that an attack on Dili was imminent and that the Australian government had advance knowledge from Indonesian intelligence sources.” Australia relayed to the International Red Cross the information that Indonesian forces had threatened to kill Australians remaining in Dili. “The threats were evidence of a final effort by Indonesia to clear the territory of foreign observers before the invasion began.” It was important to ensure that no independent witnesses would be present, including the Red Cross, whose absence “would mean that the important work of enforcing the Geneva Conventions could not be done.” To this day, the International Red Cross has been barred by the Indonesians. For the Australians, the fate of the reporters at Balibó “had set a precedent which they could not afford to ignore.”^{[107](#)}

On December 6 President Ford and Henry Kissinger visited Jakarta and the following day the Indonesian army carried out the expected full-scale invasion, setting in motion a process described by Forman as “annihilation of simple mountain people”^{[108](#)} and by others as simply genocide.

It is important to bear in mind that this is not ancient history. In October 1978, a group

of Australians who entered Dili harbor on a disabled yacht saw “frigates, patrol boats, barges crammed with Indonesian soldiers, and many aircraft and helicopters,” heard explosions in the distance, and “were left without doubts that Dili was still a war zone” (*Canberra Times*, 20 October 1978). The narrow limits of Indonesian control in East Timor and the necessity for continuing military action to extend these limits and to suppress the population are implicitly conceded even in Indonesian propaganda. In July, 1978, the Indonesian newsweekly *Tempo* published an interview with one of the Timorese collaborators, Guilherme Goncalves, ex-chairman of APODETI and now head of the East Timor Provincial Assembly established in Dili by the Indonesian invaders.¹⁰⁹ Asked whether East Timor would participate in the forthcoming Five Year Plan, Goncalves responded:

There must first be peace and calm among the people. As of now the people can only get on with their jobs in places where our troops are concentrated, such as Dili, Same or Maliana [which is a few miles from the border with Indonesian West Timor].

The implications of this remark, two and a half years after the full-scale Indonesian invasion and two years after the “integration” of East Timor into Indonesia (to which we return), seem obvious enough.

The Indonesian campaign to suppress the independence movement of East Timor continues. The annihilation of simple mountain people goes on with barely a whisper of protest in the Western industrial democracies that are providing material support and ideological cover.

The United States government professes to know very little about anything that was happening during the pre-invasion period. This is a constant refrain of government witnesses during the *March and June-July Hearings*. A few examples will be cited below. The pretense is quite outlandish. As already noted, the press had long been reporting Indonesian intentions to take over East Timor. Furthermore, Australian intelligence was well aware of Indonesian military activities in East Timor in late 1975, though the Australian government also feigned ignorance in public.¹¹⁰ There can be little doubt that U.S. intelligence was privy to the information available to Australia. It was revealed shortly after the invasion that the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, had cabled advice to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs on October 29, 1975 “that Australian knowledge of Indonesian intervention be concealed,” to avoid complications with Indonesia. “A Ministerial statement was altered last year to conceal the fact that Australia knew Indonesian troops were active in East Timor, more than a month before the all-out Indonesian invasion of the territory on December 7.”¹¹¹ Juddery

comments that this new material adds to the “mounting body of evidence that Australia had many months foreknowledge of Indonesian intentions but actively collaborated in its plans to ‘integrate’ East Timor with the republic, and that this collaboration continues behind a cloak of ostensible disapproval.” The primary difference between Australia and the United States in this respect is that in the United States the cover-up continues in the media as well (and, of course, direct U.S. complicity by means of military and other support is far greater).

The pretense of ignorance is only one aspect of the U.S. charade with regard to this period. The government also claims to have suspended military assistance to Indonesia from December 1975 until June, 1976.^{[112](#)} The temporary sanction was “unannounced and unleased” (Lescaze). It was also a fraud. “We stopped taking new orders. The items that were in the pipeline continued to be delivered to Indonesia,” General Howard M. Fish testified before Congress (*March Hearings*, p. 14). Benedict Anderson testified in the *February 1978 Hearings* that according to a report “confirmed from Department of Defense [Foreign Military Sales] printout” new offers of military equipment were also made during the period of the alleged ban:

If we are curious as to why the Indonesians never felt the force of the U.S. government’s “anguish,” the answer is quite simple. In flat contradiction to express statements by General Fish, Mr. Oakley and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke, at least *four* separate offers of military equipment were made to the Indonesian government during the January-June 1976 “administrative suspension.” This equipment consisted mainly of supplies and parts for OV-10 Broncos, Vietnam War era planes specially designed for counterinsurgency operations against adversaries without effective anti-aircraft weapons, and wholly useless for defending Indonesia from a foreign enemy. The policy of supplying the Indonesian regime with Broncos, as well as other counterinsurgency-related equipment has continued without substantial change from the Ford through the present Carter administrations.^{[113](#)}

This violation of their own secret policy was admitted by State Department and Pentagon officials who told the committee, however, that the Department of State did not engage in any deception or violation of the law.^{[114](#)} They certainly weren’t deceiving the Indonesians. In fact, it turns out that the “aid suspension” was so secret that Indonesia was never informed of it. Rep. Fraser commented that the aid suspension reminded him “of the Cheshire cat in ‘Alice in Wonderland’; all we have is the grin left.”^{[115](#)}

Of the \$44.5 million that had been proposed for the period of July, 1975 to June, 1976, 84% was already “in the pipeline” when the December secret “suspension” allegedly took place. Military aid during this period actually was above what the State Department had originally proposed to Congress, and has been increased since.^{[116](#)}

The Indonesian invasion in December, 1975 was of course reported in the U.S. press, which kept largely to the Indonesian version of the facts, as usual. David Andelman’s

story in the *New York Times* is headed “Indonesians Hold Portuguese Timor After Incursion” (8 December 1975; dateline Sydney). The Indonesians actually held only the capital city of Dili. The difference is of some significance, given that the United States has consistently been claiming that the fighting is essentially over, and that whatever we may think about the past, now we must recognize the Indonesian annexation as a fact of life and, with our traditional humanitarianism, urge the Indonesians to turn to aid and reconstruction (as of course they are planning to do). Andelman also reported falsely that the civil war (which had ended in early September) had been proceeding until the “incursion” and implied that Indonesia had offered no material assistance to the anti-Fretilin forces: “while at the beginning Indonesia offered no material assistance to the anti-Fretilin forces, now vast resources of food, ammunition and manpower are arrayed against the remaining Fretilin fighters.” These deceptive comments are true in a perverse sense; that is, since Indonesia was itself conducting the military operations while falsely alleging that “anti-Fretilin forces” were doing so, it is true, technically, that Indonesia was not offering “material assistance to the anti-Fretilin forces.”

The same deception persisted in the “Week in Review” (*New York Times*, 14 December 1975). Here it was alleged that Indonesian forces had “ousted the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin)”; as noted, FRETILIN had been “ousted” from Dili.^{[117](#)} The *Times* went on to assert, in utter defiance of the facts but in accordance with Indonesian propaganda, that since August “Fretilin forces...have been trying to overcome several other groups which sought union with Indonesia”; the only such group involved in the fighting in any significant way since September had been the Indonesian Army itself. The *Times* claimed that “the Indonesians, however, provided support for the anti-Fretilin forces,” which is about like saying that the Russians provided support for anti-fascist Czech forces in 1968.

The *New York Times* did publish an editorial condemning the Indonesian invasion (13 December 1975), while repeating the standard falsehoods produced by the Indonesian propaganda services. “By any definition,” the *Times* editorialized, “Indonesia is guilty of naked aggression in its military seizure of Portuguese Timor.” But the *Times* added thoughtfully that “to be fair there was provocation in the unilateral declaration of independence last month by the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known as Fretilin, which had seemed to be winning the civil war handily against pro-Indonesian forces until Jakarta began to intervene.” Note again the series of false claims: Indonesia had not “seized” East Timor, but rather held only the capital city. FRETILIN did not “seem” to be winning the civil war but had won it by early September. It was in

September that Indonesia began to intervene (though there was no outright invasion until December 7), not in support of “pro-Indonesian forces” but on its own, under the cover of assisting pro-Indonesian forces. None of the background just reviewed is mentioned. The *Times* editors also do not explain why FRETILIN ascendancy or the declaration of independence was a “provocation” to Indonesia, which had no claims to East Timor, and they say nothing about *Indonesian* “provocation” noted above. The *Times* editors also believe, on grounds that they do not explain, that “there is an ethnic and economic case to be made for voluntary integration”—on the “ethnic” case, see Forman’s testimony, cited above. With its traditional concern for human rights, the *Times* concludes that “the real losers are Portuguese Timor’s 620,000 inhabitants, whose interests and desires have been ignored by all parties to this deplorable affair”—including the independence forces. Perhaps similar statements were expressed by thoughtful British commentators in July 1976—though recall that Indonesia had no claim at all to East Timor.

On December 25, 1975, a *New York Times* editorial again reproached the government of Indonesia for its “aggression in seizing Portuguese Timor early this month to back up parties favoring union with Indonesia,” again repeating the falsehoods provided by the Indonesian propaganda agencies and dismissing the facts as irrelevant. Neither then nor subsequently did the *Times* make clear the fact that on that very day the Indonesian Army had landed an additional force of 15-20,000 men to try to expand its control beyond the capital city of Dili (see note 117).

It is unclear whether the *Times* reference in the December 13 editorial to “a lightning takeover” of East Timor by Indonesia, and comparable misrepresentations in its “news columns” and editorials, was an example of incompetence or deceit. It is nevertheless characteristic and, we stress again, quite important. Since shortly after the outright Indonesian invasion, the U.S. government, with the Free Press trailing loyally in its wake, has alleged that “East Timor is effectively part of Indonesia,”¹¹⁸ so that no useful purpose would be served by protesting the Indonesian invasion or withholding arms from Indonesia (much as we regret their possible use in the past in this “internal” matter).¹¹⁹ The basic government line, throughout, is as expressed by Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, discussing a forthcoming Asian tour in Washington with Australian correspondents. Asked about reported atrocities in East Timor, he said:

I want to stress I am not remotely interested in getting involved in an argument over the actual number of people killed. People were killed and that is always a tragedy but what is at issue is the actual situation in Timor today...

As for the numbers killed in the past, “we are never going to know anyway.” So let us put that aside as unknowable history, and turn to the current problems.^{[120](#)}

The same stance is adopted by State Department spokesman Robert Oakley in the *February 1978 Hearings*. He introduced a report of the State Department expressing their belief “that we have been on the right track in seeking to concentrate our efforts on encouraging the Indonesian government to do a better job of assisting the people of the territory,” reiterating the position expressed in the 1977 hearings. Oakley does not outline the good job that the Indonesian government is already doing, which should be made even better. We will return to the character of this good job. Oakley then adds his personal comment that “we have directed our efforts toward urging Indonesia to institute an administration in East Timor which is as responsive as possible to the needs of the people and to enlist the assistance of international humanitarian organizations” (p. 66).^{[121](#)} Meanwhile we supply them with military equipment to continue the massacre.

These references to the complete Indonesian victory are regularly interspersed with indications that the fighting continues. A remarkable example occurs in the testimony of State Department legal representative George H. Aldrich in the *June-July Hearings*, pp. 46-47. Discussing the formal incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia on July 17, 1976, recognized by the United States but few other countries, Aldrich observes that this incorporation “followed unanimous approval by the People’s Council of East Timor on May 31, 1976, of a petition asking Indonesia to accept integration of East Timor into Indonesia.” On this farce, which was acceptable in the United States on the authority of the Indonesian government, the sole source of assurances of its legitimacy, see note 148. Aldrich continues: “We actually know very little about the selection process for these delegates, although the process itself took place at a time of military occupation by Indonesia during which considerable fighting was still going on.” Actually, the U.S. government knows all that needs to be known about the “selection process”—the feigned ignorance compares with the pretense concerning the pre-invasion period—but it is striking that on the basis of this pretended ignorance the United States was willing to recognize the takeover while at the same time recognizing that considerable fighting was still going on, “renewing” the arms shipments to Indonesia which, in fact, were never halted. The duplicity of the government is matched only by that of the loyal media.

By its adherence to government claims in news reporting and editorial commentary, the Free Press has played its role in permitting the U.S. government to contribute effectively to the massacres and atrocities in East Timor on the pretext that whatever may have

happened (and of course we will never know, etc.), it is now a matter of history. A comprehensive collection of articles from December 8, 1975 to the present reporting that fighting is over and Indonesia is now in control, and dismissing past reports of atrocities as “exaggerated” but in any event now irrelevant, would constitute a revealing record of media subservience to the state, to be placed alongside the refusal to acknowledge the ongoing atrocities—again in conformity with the higher purpose of insuring good relations between the United States and its valuable subfascist client. A number of examples are reviewed below.

We will not undertake to review the scanty coverage by academic specialists. To cite one example, the well-known Southeast Asia scholar Michael Leifer of the London School of Economics described “Indonesia’s decisive intervention” as a case “in which the imperatives of force and order have not necessarily been matched by justice”¹²²—one wonders what the reaction would have been had his colleagues concerned with Eastern Europe described Russia’s “decisive intervention” in Hungary in 1956 in the same cautious and modulated tones.

New York Times coverage of the events leading up to the Indonesian invasion gives further insight into the workings of the Free Press. We have already discussed the remarkable distortion of Gerald Stone’s account by skillful editorial revision and deletion. This was followed a few weeks later by a special filed from Dili giving an account of the situation which was surprisingly accurate, noting in particular that FRETILIN “is in de facto control of the territory.”¹²³ The regular *Times* correspondent, David Andelman, turned to the topic on November 26, in a dispatch from Jakarta.¹²⁴ He noted that Indonesia badly needed Western aid, and with Ford coming for a visit and congressional approval for new military grants still pending, “Indonesians, in the words of a senior military official, will be ‘on our best behavior’.” He did not have anything to say about what their “best behavior” had been in the preceding months but wrote instead that the Indonesians “point to their hands-off policy with respect to the civil war that is engulfing Portuguese Timor” (there was no civil war and had not been for two months but rather a limited Indonesian invasion). Continuing, Andelman explained that U.S.-supplied Indonesian destroyers “cruise the waters around Timor to prevent infiltration of arms by sea to the left-wing rebels who seized control of the colony last August” (at that point Atabae had been under naval bombardment for 12 days, and fell to Indonesian occupation two days later). Andelman continues: “American supplied Indonesian troops patrol the Indonesian side of the border on the Island. Last week it was announced here that Indonesian forces would be

supplying and training refugee opponents of the rebels in ‘self-defense’ before they are returned to the eastern part of the island.” This is six weeks after the fall of Balibó to an Indonesian military attack. Finally comes this insight: “The Indonesian forces reportedly at the direct orders of President Suharto, who has been urged by military men to intervene, have been showing remarkable restraint, for what is at stake [is military aid].” This “remarkable restraint,” as we have seen, existed only in the pages of the country’s leading paper; and in the *Times* index, where the phrase identifies the article.

On November 30, two days after the Indonesian forces captured Atabae, the *Times* carried a Reuters report stating that “...pro-Indonesian forces advanced from the border toward [Dili],” which in translations means: Indonesian forces accompanied by some Timorese collaborators from the groups that had lost the civil war months earlier were advancing toward Dili.

The rare and uninformative articles scattered through the *Times* during this crucial period have another striking characteristic. While there are references to allegations by FRETILIN of Indonesian involvement in the fighting (e.g. October 19), the Indonesian version is presented not as claim but as fact. Thus: “Latest reports from Portuguese Timor, *where a civil war is raging between rival political factions*, said that the bodies of five foreigners were found in Balibó, but there was no confirmation that they were the missing Australians.”¹²⁵ Or: “The pro-Indonesian forces have been engaged in a war with the left-wing Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor...” (December 2). Again, the Indonesian version repeated as fact by the *Times* is completely false, according to all independent observers.

A review of the *scope* of *New York Times* coverage of Timor also gives some understanding of how the Free Press functions. For the year 1975, when the Portuguese revolution and the fate of the Portuguese colonies was a matter of great concern in the West, the *New York Times* index has six full columns of citations to Timor. In 1976, when Indonesian troops were carrying out a major massacre, coverage dropped to less than half a column. For 1977, when the massacre advanced to a point that some feel amounts to genocide, there are five lines. These five lines, furthermore, refer to a story about refugees in Portugal. Actual coverage of East Timor is a flat zero.

Since the Indonesian invasion of December 7, 1975, the country has been effectively closed to the outside world by the Indonesian military. Nevertheless, evidence is available as to what has taken place. Much of the information is based on interviews with refugees in Portugal conducted by James Dunn, who testified before Congress during the *March*

Hearings; the Western press, always passionately concerned with reports of refugees from Communist tyranny, has carefully avoided these refugees¹²⁶—or to be precise, has, as we will see, described their present plight while carefully avoiding their testimony about the events in East Timor. Other information has been received from Catholic priests in Timor who, as in Latin America, have vainly attempted to arouse the conscience and attention of the Western world, and from other sources, to which we return, which have also been assiduously ignored by the Free Press.

Dunn's congressional testimony was given a largely hostile reception and was generally ignored and quickly forgotten in the nation's press, which has also disregarded other pertinent material on this annoying subject. Congressman J. Herbert Burke, then ranking minority member of the House subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, wrote:

I have my own suspicions respecting what might be behind the testimony [of Dunn's], and I agree with you that it is in all our interests to bury the Timor issue quickly and completely.¹²⁷

Burke's suspicions, which are based on no evidence that has been made public, simply reflect the natural outrage over the fact that someone dares to provide information concerning crimes for which the United States bears no small responsibility. Any Russian functionary would react in the same way to charges of atrocities in the Soviet sphere. His concern that the Timor issue be quickly and completely buried is also easy to comprehend. If there were anything resembling a free and honest press in the United States (indeed, most of the West), the issue of Timor would be of major international concern for the reason already noted: the "annihilation of simple mountain people" proceeds as a direct consequence of Western aid and silence, therefore complicity.

Burke's concern that the issue of Timor be "buried" is understandable given that the United States had provided crucial diplomatic and material support for these continuing atrocities. Rep. Helen S. Meyner, who visited East Timor in a congressional delegation that was permitted a 23-hour guided tour, reports that the Commander of the Indonesian forces, asked whether U.S. weapons had been used in the invasion, responded: "Of course, these are the only weapons we have."¹²⁸ That is actually a slight exaggeration, it seems. Asked by Congressman Fraser whether it is true that "We armed [the Indonesian military] so that they were able to carry out the use of force," the Deputy Legal Advisor of the State Department, George H. Aldrich, replied: "That is correct. They were armed roughly 90% with our equipment." He evaded the question of use of U.S. arms, apart from a "guess" that they might have been used, pleading ignorance: "...we really did not know very much. Maybe we did not want to know very much, but I gather that for a time we did not know."¹²⁹

As to this “ignorance,” it is a fact that the West generally, the United States specifically, does not want to know, preferring that the issue be quickly buried, forgotten along with the mass graves and demolished villages of East Timor.

Introducing the 1977 congressional hearings, Chairman Donald Fraser observed that they were called to consider “allegations of genocide committed by the Indonesian forces against the population of East Timor,” allegations which “are extremely serious both particularly in terms of the human tragedy which is depicted as well as the implications concerning both past and present U.S. policy.”¹³⁰ He presented his final impressions of the last day of the hearings in the following words:

That is, that the United States was apprised, at least in general, perhaps specifically because I think Secretary Kissinger was in Djakarta the day before the invasion, we were apprised of the intention of the Indonesian government but we made no serious objection to what they proposed to do; that as soon as the military operations, which were by the testimony of other members of the State Department at least initially quite violent, within a matter of months after the major military operations came to an end and what I would regard as a facade of self-determination was expressed, the United States immediately indicated it was satisfied with what had transpired and resumed shipments of military assistance which it never told Indonesia it was suspending. U.S. arms were used in all that and continue to be used today, there is a degree of complicity here by the United States that I really find to be quite disturbing. Even if one sets that aside, to write off the rights of 600,000 people because we are friends with the country that forcibly annexed them does real violence to any profession of adherence to principle or to human rights.

I am deeply disappointed that this administration has continued that posture. It seems to me that on this score they have come out with a very bad rating...¹³¹

Some witnesses went further. Thomas M. Franck, Professor of Law at New York University Law School, stated that if the new administration, with its highly touted concern for human rights, did not reverse existing policy, “it will be adding blatant hypocrisy to earlier malevolence.”¹³² The policy has not been reversed, nor so far as is known, even reassessed.

Congressman Fraser’s reference to past and present U.S. policy is apt. The United States has been officially involved with the Indonesian military since 1958 (the year of an abortive CIA effort to overthrow the Sukarno government). Military aid flowed generously prior to the 1965 coup. Its purpose was explained by Pentagon official Paul Warnke, a reputed dove, in congressional testimony:

The purpose for which it was maintained was not to support an existing [i.e. the Sukarno] regime. In fact, we were opposed, eventually and increasingly to the then existing regime. It was to preserve a liaison of sorts with the military of the country which in effect turned out to be one of the conclusive elements in the overthrow of that regime.¹³³

—not to speak of the subsequent massacre. The same technique was used to good advantage later in Chile under Allende. In following years the United States expanded its military aid and training of the military and police. The Country Officer for Indonesia in

the State Department, David T. Kenney, is capable of saying, with a straight face, that one purpose of U.S. military aid to Indonesia is “to keep that area peaceful” (*March Hearings*, p. 19); this, in testimony on the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

The United States attitude toward the Indonesian invasion of East Timor is explained as follows by Aldrich, speaking for the State Department:

My impression is that we made it clear to [the Indonesian government] that we understood the situation they were in, we understood the pressures they felt and their concern about the fighting that was going on and the potential for instability that would be caused by developments as they saw them.

We certainly did make them aware, if they were not already aware, of the problems that would be posed under our law if they took action with equipment they had received from us, contrary to the agreement. But it is not my impression, and as I say I am probably not fully informed on this, but it is not my impression that we pressed them terribly hard about it. We simply told them what I suspect they already knew, that there might be problems under our military assistance laws.¹³⁴

The evidence available supports the judgment that the United States not only took no significant action but also gave its tacit or explicit approval to the invasion. It was certainly known that an Indonesian invasion was imminent when President Ford and Henry Kissinger arrived in Jakarta; Australia had, in fact, already evacuated its nationals.¹³⁵ The invasion took place just as the U.S. visitors departed.

The official U.S. view is “that resolution of the matter would be best reached by the parties directly involved—the Indonesians, the Portuguese, and the Timorese.”¹³⁶ No attempt is made to reconcile this position with certain simple and evident facts: (1) the legitimacy of the Indonesian “involvement” is precisely what is at issue, not to be assumed in advance by fiat; (2) the Portuguese strenuously opposed the Indonesian involvement and in fact broke relations with Indonesia; (3) the Timorese government that was in de facto control of the territory apart from the border areas already conquered by Indonesia certainly opposed Indonesia’s invasion, with overwhelming popular support so far as is known, and continue to do so insofar as they are able to resist. One may argue about this or that detail, but there seems ample reason to accept the judgment of Jill Jolliffe that “the avowed willingness of most of the political associations formed after April 25, 1974 to now fight alongside FRETILIN [which had won handily in the brief civil war and was governing with success and popular support] epitomises the truth that the force now seeking to assert itself is that of Timorese nationalism...” (p. 297). The official U.S. government position therefore reduces to acceptance of Indonesian aggression and its consequences, whatever the attitudes of the other “parties directly involved,” and surely irrespective of the attitudes of the primary party, the people of East Timor themselves.

The invasion took place while Ford and Kissinger were on their way from Jakarta to

Hawaii:

When he landed at Hawaii, reporters asked Mr. Ford for comment on the invasion of Timor. He smiled and said: “We’ll talk about that later.” But press secretary Ron Nessen later gave reporters a statement saying: “The United States is always concerned about the use of violence. The President hopes it can be resolved peacefully.”¹³⁷

Henry Kissinger, travelling with Ford, had already given his reactions. He “told newsmen in Jakarta that the United States would not recognize the Fretilin-declared republic and ‘the United States understands Indonesia’s position on the question’.”¹³⁸

As for the failure of the U.S. to take any significant action, that is sufficiently clear from the record. We have already mentioned the fraudulent “suspension” of military aid. A secret cable sent in August, 1975 from the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Richard Woolcott to the head of the Australian Foreign Affairs Department was leaked to the press in May, 1976. In it, Ambassador Woolcott, recommends “a pragmatic rather than a principled stand,” because “that is what national interest and foreign policy is all about”: “As I stressed in Canberra last month, we are dealing with a settled Indonesian policy to incorporate Timor—as even Malik admitted to me on Friday.” Recall that this was July-August, 1975; again, it is hardly credible that the United States did not receive this or comparable information. Woolcott continues:

The United States might have some influence on Indonesia at present as Indonesia really wants and needs U.S. assistance in its military reequipment program. The State Department has, we understand, instructed the embassy to cut down its reporting on Timor. But [U.S.] Ambassador Newsom told me last night that he is under instructions from Kissinger personally not to involve himself in discussions of Timor with the Indonesians on the ground that the U.S. is involved in enough problems of greater importance overseas at present. I will be seeing Newsom on Monday, but his present attitude is that the U.S. should keep out of the Portuguese Timor situation and allow events to take their course.¹³⁹

The U.S press, to our knowledge, has never discussed this material or its significance.

A report in the Australian press, noting that “the United States will double its military aid to Indonesia this year even while condemning Indonesia’s military presence in East Timor” cites a State Department official who repeats the official view, while expressing its content a bit more clearly than usual:

In terms of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Indonesia, we are more or less condoning the incursion into East Timor... We don’t want to make a strong stand one way or the other. The problem of East Timor is basically one for the countries involved—Indonesia, Portugal and the near neighbors, such as Australia. The United States wants to keep its relationship with Indonesia close and friendly. We regard Indonesia as a friendly, nonaligned nation—a nation we do a lot of business with.¹⁴⁰

A review of U.S. behavior at the United Nations supports this assessment.¹⁴¹ On December 12, 1975 the General Assembly adopted resolution 3485 (72 votes to 10, with 43 abstentions), which “*strongly deplores* the military intervention of the armed forces of

Indonesia in Portuguese Timor” and “*calls upon* the Government of Indonesia to desist from further violation of the territorial integrity of Portuguese Timor and to withdraw without delay its armed forces from the Territory in order to enable the people of the Territory freely to exercise their right to self-determination and independence.” Coming immediately after the Indonesian invasion, this response of the United Nations was of crucial importance. The United States abstained as did most of its European allies. There is reason to believe that the United States may have blocked support for the resolution. On January 23, 1976, UN Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan sent a cablegram to Henry Kissinger and all U.S. embassies entitled “The Blocs are Breaking Up” in which he took pride in the “considerable progress” that had been made by U.S. arm-twisting tactics at the UN “toward a basic foreign policy goal, that of breaking up the massive blocs of nations, mostly new nations, which for so long have been arrayed against us in international forums and in diplomatic encounters generally.” He specifically cited the General Assembly vote on Timor (and the Sahara—see note 149), when “the non-aligned were similarly divided in the voting.”¹⁴² Testifying before Congress, Thomas Franck commented that “the failure of 53 countries, including the United States, to support this resolution, I contend sent a clear signal to Indonesia that the United Nations lacked the political will to oppose Djakarta’s action and that the United States would turn a deaf ear to the demands of the East Timorese to be accorded the benefits of the firmly established international normative right to self-determination.”¹⁴³

On December 22 the United States joined in the unanimous approval of what Franck called “a rather wishy-washy compromise resolution,” Security Council resolution 384, which “*calls upon* the Government of Indonesia to withdraw without delay all its forces from the Territory.” On April 22, 1976 the Security Council passed resolution 389 which repeated this demand. As the *New York Times* commented, the “language is considered ineffectual”: “Many delegates and some United Nations officials said privately that the rather bland language of today’s Security Council document practically meant that Indonesia was given leeway to consolidate its hold on the former Portuguese colony.”¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the United States abstained, along with Japan; the resolution was passed 12 votes to none with two abstentions. As the *Times* commented, “Indonesia’s stand...was discretely backed by the United States.” The United States voted against the General Assembly resolution of December 1, 1976 (passed 68 votes to 20 with 49 abstentions) which “*rejects* the claim that East Timor has been integrated into Indonesia, inasmuch as the people of the Territory have not been able to exercise freely their right to self-determination and independence.” A year later the General Assembly passed a resolution

(67 votes to 27, with 46 abstentions) calling on the UN Special Committee on Decolonization to send a mission to the territory. Indonesia announced that it would bar any UN mission. The United States voted against the resolution, along with Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, “all of which seek close political and economic ties with Indonesia.” The vote came as Indonesia was preparing a new military offensive against FRETILIN, scheduled for December 31, 1977.^{[145](#)}

The UN made an attempt to carry out an on-the-spot investigation in January, 1976, after the condemnation of Indonesia in December. On December 28, Vittorio Winspeare Guicciardi was selected as UN emissary to East Timor. He visited territories controlled by the Indonesians in late January but was prevented from visiting FRETILIN-held areas, that is, almost all of East Timor. He then attempted to contact FRETILIN through a radio transmitter in Darwin, Australia; the FRETILIN representative in Darwin was immediately arrested and the transmitter seized and confiscated. New contacts were established through the radio of a Portuguese corvette in Darwin harbor, and FRETILIN named four possible landing places. Indonesian forces immediately bombed these areas and mounted a large-scale offensive at one of them. At that point the UN representative abandoned his efforts.^{[146](#)}

As already noted, the U.S. has consistently attempted to shift the time of the reported massacres to the period prior to the full-scale Indonesian invasion, in conformity with the requirements of its Indonesian client, and with the cooperation of the Free Press. The U.S. estimate of “probably under 10,000” total casualties (“civilian, military, everything else”^{[147](#)}) is far below any estimate offered by informed observers or even the Indonesian authorities as we shall see. The State Department further claims that though there were “some civilian casualties,” these were the result of “a couple of occasions when Indonesian military units, according to our intelligence, did commit excesses in the towns against the civilian population” and “were called back to Indonesia and the commanders were punished,” which “reveals...(that)...the Indonesian Government was not deliberately setting out to do violence to the civilian population; but there were military units that got out of control and this sort of thing did take place.” This effort to exonerate the Indonesian military should be compared with the detailed accounts by refugees, local priests and others to which we return, which indicate that the massacres were consistent and deliberate policy, that they were most severe outside of the few urban areas and that they continue at a frightful level until this day. As already noted, the State Department further takes the position that “Timor has effectively become a part of Indonesia” (Oakley, *March*

Hearings, pp. 7, 16). Thus the integration announced by the Indonesians and confirmed by a faked “people’s assembly” is simply a fact.¹⁴⁸ “As a political matter, the United States has recognized the annexation of East Timor and the legality of the exercise of sovereignty there by the Indonesian Government” (Aldrich, *June-July Hearings*, p. 64). The United States has taken no stand, Aldrich continues, on the question whether Indonesia has violated “international standards or norms of conduct of international principles” in “the seizure and annexation of East Timor.”

In response to repeated questioning by Rep. Donald Fraser, Aldrich stated that he was not “in a position to judge” the question of the adherence to international standards:

There certainly was at the time considerable international [sic] strife and killing going on in East Timor. The Indonesians were the only country in a position to put an end to it. Whether they did it properly or did not do it properly, whether they did it with improper motives, I really do not want to go into and try to second-guess. I think that is something which scholars are better able to draw conclusions about than lawyers for the Department of State (p. 65).

Aldrich’s reference to “considerable international strife” was presumably a slip of the tongue, as obvious truth overwhelmed diplomatic pretense. His statement is true in one respect; Indonesian intervention was causing strife and killing even prior to the full scale Indonesian invasion of December. To state, under these circumstances, that “the Indonesians were the only country in a position to put an end to” the strife and killing for which they alone were responsible reveals an astonishing degree of hypocrisy, even for a State Department lawyer. As for his reference to scholarship, presumably tongue-in-cheek, Aldrich need have little fear. To judge by the scholarly literature, there will be very few scholars to draw the obvious conclusions that a government functionary must repress—apart from unfortunate slips.

While the State Department professes ignorance about the facts, reserving that matter to the judgment of history, it has a clear insight into U.S. “interests.” As Aldrich states, the United States did not question the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia because it was “an accomplished fact” and “such a policy would not serve our best interests in light of the importance of our relations with Indonesia” (p. 48).

The latter qualification is of course crucial. A report by the Congressional Research Service notes that the United States has “a long history of non-recognition of territorial changes brought about by force,” citing many examples and two exceptions: namely, the takeover of phosphate-rich Sahara areas by U.S.-armed and trained Moroccan forces in violation of the will of the indigenous people, and the case of East Timor.¹⁴⁹

The same apparent inconsistency is stressed by Leonard Meeker, former Legal Advisor

to the Department of State. He notes, for example, that “the Department of State has never recognized since 1940 the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union,” an act that was not conducted by U.S.-armed troops and is surely far more irreversible than the Indonesian takeover of East Timor.¹⁵⁰ Asked about this matter, Aldrich replied that with regard to the Baltic states “I think we did what we thought was the right thing and we have maintained it with a steadfastness that is rare and admirable, but I am not sure that if we did the same thing with respect to East Timor it would be something that we could consider would be a useful advance on human rights.”¹⁵¹

It is perhaps unfair to record the efforts to justify state policy on the part of a beleaguered functionary. What does deserve condemnation, however, is the general silence and deceit of the mass media¹⁵² and the fact that academic scholarship so commonly refuses to see the implications and seeks to disguise them with no less miserable evasions and falsehoods.

The country officer for Indonesia in the Department of State, David T. Kenney, also presented his thoughts on the matter of integration in congressional testimony.¹⁵³ He offered the State Department judgment that “at the present time,” that is, March, 1977, 9 months after “integration” about 200,000 people out of a population that he estimated at 650,000 in East Timor “would be considered in areas under Indonesian administration.” This estimate by the State Department specialist on the subject contrasts sharply with the claims by the U.S. government that the war was effectively over by early 1976. Kenney was then asked by a congressman whether the “people [are] relatively happy with the fact they are now under Indonesia.” He replied as follows:

Sir, my judgment on this is they are, that given the circumstances and alternatives available to them, which were put in terms of continuing the war on the one hand or possibly Indonesian administration on the other that the people of Timor, as far as we can judge from all those we have talked to, is that they are. They have decided their best interest lies at this time, in incorporation with Indonesia.

Their “decision” was expressed in the “popular assembly” to which we have already referred. Commenting on this amazing testimony, Benedict Anderson noted that Kenney’s claim “is tantamount to saying that during World War II the Filipinos decided their best interest lay in incorporation into Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, or that the people of the Baltic states have ‘decided *their* best interests lie’ in incorporation into the Soviet Union”¹⁵⁴ —even putting aside the more than two-thirds of the population who have as yet not been able to express their “decision” because they are not under Indonesian administration. Or to put it in the terms favored by the State Department, because they are not yet “protected” by Indonesia. As State Department representative

Robert Oakley explained:

We are concerned about the situation in East Timor, and as I stated we would like to see the situation there solved, as we would any conflict, by peaceful means. This has not yet happened [N.B., by February, 1978]. There has been a certain change in the situation, in that a large number of people have moved from areas that could be described either as no-man's land or under the control of Fretilin to areas where they could be *protected by the Indonesian Government.*¹⁵⁵

"Protected," that is, from FRETILIN, the guerrillas who still had over two-thirds of the population under their "control" in March, 1977 according to the State Department. In short, after the U.S.-backed Indonesian military succeeds in bombing and starving the population into submission, the remnants can then "decide" to accept Indonesian administration, under the "protection" of the Indonesian Government. Once again, it would be difficult to find comparable examples of cynicism outside of the totalitarian states. As we shall see, the Free Press accepts these concepts, quite generally, when it turns to the flight of refugees from areas where they have been "forced to live" by the guerrillas.

The United States has not been content with recognizing the Indonesian conquest and ignoring the attendant massacres. It has also pressured its allies to do the same—which is not inordinately difficult, since their interests too are served by tolerating or supporting Indonesian atrocities. The *Melbourne Age* (3 August 1976) reports that "the U.S. has warned Australia not to allow further deterioration of relations with Indonesia over Timor," referring to discussions in Washington between high-ranking members of the Ford Administration and Australian Prime Minister Fraser. The front page headline reads: "Fraser given blunt warning at Washington talks: 'Don't anger Jakarta': U.S. protecting Indon channel for its N-subs." An accompanying cartoon shows President Ford admonishing Fraser, saying "With the bodies of the East Timorese...we can balance Russia's military might." The story explains that the fastest and safest passage for U.S. nuclear submarines from the Pacific to the Indian Oceans is through the deep water straits north of Timor island, and if this passage were denied by Indonesian action, under its "long-proclaimed archipelagic concept," the submarine journey between Guam and the Indian Ocean Diego Garcia outpost would be lengthened by 8-10 days. Meanwhile Russian submarines must use "the shallow and overcrowded Straits of Malacca and Singapore, where they have to surface in order to pass through safely," which may explain why the USSR has "kept its criticism of the East Timor annexation to a minimum." Russian interest in sharing in Indonesia's wealth is no doubt also a major if not the major reason for Russian silence, as is also true with regard to Iran, Argentina, and other resource-rich subfascist client states in the U.S. global system. The article continues:

“Observers believe the strategic location of East Timor is one reason why the US Administration has readily acquiesced to Indonesia’s takeover of the disputed Portuguese colony and to its campaign to crush the Left-wing Fretilin independence movement.”

Southeast Asian correspondent Michael Richardson took up the same theme (Melbourne Age, 4 August, 1976). Noting U.S. warnings to Australia with regard to criticisms of Indonesia issued through diplomatic channels in Canberra, Richardson asserts that “US officials in South-East Asia confirmed the warning followed two high-powered academic assessments of the importance of Indonesian waterways in current US nuclear strategy,” one by Robert E. Osgood of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (closely linked to the State Department) and the other by Michael MccGwire, Professor of Maritime and Strategic Studies at Canada’s Dalhousie University. “In terms of America’s ready acquiescence in Indonesia’s takeover of Portuguese Timor,” Richardson adds, “it is significant that the Ombai-Wetar narrows [one of two straits that would fall under Indonesian control under proposals being considered at the UN Law of the Sea conference] are in the eastern half of the island between it and the island of Atauro.” These two straits are the only ones (apart from Gibraltar) “through which [the U.S.] needs passage to reach Soviet targets and for which [it] cannot count on Allied permission.” Richardson asserts that U.S. officials in Southeast Asia have confirmed these assessments concerning the crucial strategic role of the straits “for the projection of military force from the Pacific into the Indian Ocean” (MccGwire). Richardson reported (Age, 5 August, 1976) that Western intelligence sources are apprehensive about the possibility that the USSR might offer to resume the military aid terminated with the 1965 coup, assisting Indonesia’s reorganization of its armed forces begun in 1971 with U.S. and Australian assistance, with the aim of making them “more mobile and effective for dealing with insurgency, regional uprisings and foreign infiltration.” Particularly important are ground transport vehicles and helicopters, since supplied by the United States and employed effectively in Timor. Actually more is at stake. The straits near Timor are important for the passage of supertankers. Furthermore, as FRETILIN has been claiming for years, the area between Timor and Australia is potentially rich in oil. This is confirmed by Michael Richardson in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (5 January 1979) in a discussion of conflicts between Indonesia and Australia over the seabed boundary. He notes that the disputed zone is believed to be “part of a very promising offshore oil and natural gas province. The petroleum companies have certainly been queuing up to start a multi-million dollar search,” including a U.S. oil company that had “planned to start initial reconnaissance and seismic exploration in 1975” but was delayed by the war. The

potential oil wealth has bearing on the claim by the *New York Times* (see pp. 165-67) and others that East Timor would not be economically viable, on the relations between Australia and Indonesia, and on Indonesia's efforts to conquer East Timor with the backing of the industrial democracies.

The *Washington Post* also took note of U.S. concern over the dispute between Australia and Indonesia.¹⁵⁶ "The last thing American diplomats in the area want is a split between the two friends, especially one that current Australian emotions could force into a confrontation in which Washington would be asked to choose sides." The reference to [Australian] "emotions" relates to Australia's concern "that the Indonesian invasion of East Timor is part of a pattern of military expansion by their most powerful neighbor" and to the call for an inquiry into the death of the five journalists in October, 1975. The report notes that José Martins, formerly a Timorese collaborator with Indonesia, "last week gave a detailed version of how the Australians were gunned down by Indonesian troops."¹⁵⁷ What was particularly "infuriating for Australians" was a statement by Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik who "proposed a very Asian answer to the problem of the five journalists' deaths"¹⁵⁸ : "'Let us forget them,' he told a press conference in Jakarta attended by Australian correspondents, 'and we will erect a monument to them.'"

In the *March Hearings*, the most informed and extended testimony was that of James Dunn, who was consul to Portuguese Timor from 1962 to 1964, a member of a fact-finding mission sent by the Australian government to assess the situation after the Portuguese coup ("during the period for which the State Department claims not to have much information" [Dunn]) and also led an aid mission in October and November, 1975 "between the beginning of the covert Indonesian attacks, as we chose to call it in Australia, and the events of December, 1975."¹⁵⁹

After a brief review of the bare facts, Dunn turned to his main topic, the atrocities following the December invasion. "According to accounts from Timorese refugees in Portugal, some of whom were in East Timor at the time of the attack, information from Chinese refugees in Taiwan and Australia, and reports from within Indonesia itself, the move to annex this territory has been a brutal operation, marked by the wanton slaughter of possibly between 50,000 and 100,000 Timorese, by extensive looting and by other excesses such as rape and torture." He submitted a detailed memorandum, published in the *March Hearings* (pp. 31-38) on his interviews with Timorese refugees in Portugal in January, 1977 during a visit made at the initiative of non-governmental agencies including the Australian Catholic Relief and Community Aid Abroad, who funded the trip.

These refugees, Dunn points out, are nearly all supporters of the conservative UDT party. Dunn interviewed about 200 of the 1500 Timorese refugees in Portugal, including more than half of the approximately 25 who had spent some time in East Timor after the invasion. “All accounts of the Indonesian military action against East Timor, and conditions under Indonesian occupation until as late as September, 1976, portrayed a grim picture of the situation in the territory. Even in Indonesian Timor, the Timorese refugees virtually became prisoners in the camps set up by the Indonesians” and were deprived of medical facilities and frequently humiliated, suffering many deaths.¹⁶⁰ Dunn says that he urged the refugees “not to exaggerate or distort their stories,” but “without exception, however, they related stories of excesses by Indonesian troops,” including people who claimed to have witnessed the incidents and “prominent Timorese who had not been involved in the politics of East Timor, and who had not initially been strongly opposed to ‘integration’.” “According to informants, many of the Indonesian troops killed indiscriminately from the beginning of their attack on Dili [the capital city]. However, several prominent Timorese said that the killing in the mountain areas was far more extensive than it was in Dili. In the mountain areas, they claimed, whole villages were wiped out as Indonesian troops advanced into the interior.” There follow detailed and specific accounts of mass murder, rape, looting, starvation. Refugees consistently agreed that a figure of 100,000 killed was “credible, because of the widespread killing in the mountains [where most of the population lives] and because of the extensive bombing,” reportedly including napalm.

Dunn summarizes these interviews by stating that the plight of the Timorese “might well constitute, relatively speaking, the most serious case of contravention of human rights facing the world at this time.”

Dunn noted in testimony that there are other corroboratory sources (to which we return), including letters from Chinese in Taiwan and Darwin, one of which alleged that 80% of the Chinese (a community that tended to be pro-Indonesian and that monopolized wealth and commerce) may have been killed by the Indonesians.¹⁶¹ His account of refugee and other reports appears to be careful and judicious to an extent that is unusual for the genre. He insists that people not accept his account but rather use it as motivation for investigating the reports of refugees directly to check the authenticity of what he has discovered. The refugees in Lisbon, Dunn comments, “fully support my presence here and they would like to present witnesses themselves if this committee was prepared to give them an opportunity to do so”—which of course it was not; the only Timorese permitted

to appear before Congress were those selected by the Indonesian invaders. Dunn is neither pro-FRETILIN nor anti-Indonesian, and indeed urged that “it is very important that Indonesia should get as much assistance as possible to meet its development problems.” It is doubtful that there is another Westerner who is in a comparable position to present an objective and dispassionate assessment.

Representative Fraser asked the State Department Representative Robert Oakley whether the State Department or any of its agencies had attempted to interview the refugees in Portugal. Oakley responded that they had not.¹⁶² The Free Press maintains the same discipline. There are reports on the Timorese refugees in Portugal, but their experiences in Timor are carefully avoided. Marvine Howe interviewed refugees in Portugal in October, 1976.¹⁶³ She writes that “about 40,000 Timorese fled the civil war in East Timor last year and took refuge in West Timor...” She repeats the apparently exaggerated State Department figures (see note 160) and, typically, refers only to the “civil war.” The sole reference to Indonesia is that life in Indonesian West Timor was hard. To appreciate the significance of this report, and the general avoidance of the crucial issue that it exemplifies, one must place it in context of the massive effort by the Free Press to elicit any information from refugees that might possibly be incriminating or negative with regard to Indochina.¹⁶⁴

We return directly to Dunn’s reception by the congressional committee and the press reaction, which offer an interesting contrast to the response to testimony on human rights violations outside of the U.S. sphere of influence. But first, it is worth noting that even prior to Dunn’s testimony there was evidence that something rather disturbing was underway in Timor. The *New York Times* (15 February, 1976) had published a report that 60,000 people had been killed in East Timor, 10% of the population. This report appeared on page 11 at the bottom of a column below a story on another subject, and merited all of 150 words. This single reference to an ongoing massacre should, once again, be compared to the vast outpouring of denunciation and horror with regard to “genocide” or “autogenocide” in Cambodia, beginning immediately after the U.S.-backed government was deposed and continuing with mounting intensity thereafter. The most extreme allegations offered by those who have actually investigated atrocities estimate the numbers killed at about 100,000 out of a population of 7-8 million, though many other figures have been bandied about freely in the Western media. See Volume II, Chapter 6, for detailed analysis. As we shall see, the sources offering these estimates are of extremely low credibility; comparable work critical of Western actions would be dismissed out of hand.

Furthermore, the analysts are uniformly hostile to the Cambodian Communists, whereas the estimates on Indonesian atrocities derive from pro-Indonesian sources (e.g. the Indonesian government itself and Indonesian church officials) or independent analysts whose work has received no critical challenge from those who ignore or disparage it. But even if we accept the estimates by these hostile critics of the Cambodian regime at face value, the comparison to Timor gives a revealing indication of the overwhelming bias and ideological commitment of the Western media.

A more careful look at the 150 words that the *Times* devoted to the reported killing of 60,000 people in Timor reveals the duplicity of the Free Press with still greater clarity. The *Times* report of February, 1976 reads as follows:

About 60,000 people have been killed since the outbreak of civil war in Portuguese Timor last August, according to the deputy chairman of the territory's provisional government... "The war is virtually over because only a few remnants of the Fretilin forces are fighting in the jungles or hills," Francisco Xavier Lopez da Cruz said. He referred to the Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor, which has been fight [sic] forces favoring union with Indonesia.

Apart from the estimate of numbers killed, this is simply a handout from the Indonesian propaganda agencies. Da Cruz was Deputy Governor of the puppet regime installed by the Indonesians after the invasion.^{[165](#)} In the civil war of August-September, 1975, perhaps 2,000-3,000 were killed; the remainder of the estimated 60,000 were victims of Indonesian intervention, primarily the murderous attack of December 7, 1975 and subsequently. The statement by the *Times* that FRETILIN has been fighting forces favoring union with Indonesia is on a par with a (hypothetical) statement by the Nazi press that the French resistance in 1944 has been fighting forces favoring occupation by Germany. The forces "favoring union with Indonesia" had been defeated in September and had played no significant part in the subsequent fighting. These forces did not, in fact, favor such union for the most part, certainly not prior to their defeat and probably not thereafter, if we discount the effects of Indonesian coercion. As for da Cruz's statement that the war is virtually over, that bears comparison with the *Times* headline of December 8 already cited: "Indonesians Hold Portuguese Timor After Incursion," when in fact the Indonesians held the capital city of Dili after an invasion. As we write, the war continues, with thousands of new Indonesian troops dispatched.^{[166](#)}

But let us leave this testimony to the Freedom of the Press and return to Dunn's testimony and the response to it. The testimony was evidently available in advance to reporters, and a fair factual account of its contents appeared in the *Washington Post*^{[167](#)} when Rep. Fraser announced the hearings. The *New York Times* carried a briefer story by Bernard Gwertzman,^{[168](#)} referring to Dunn's testimony but giving no details and also

noting the State Department belief that “the reports of atrocities have been greatly exaggerated” though “we know very little”—a curious pair of comments—and that Indonesia had taken “significant steps to minimize possible use of American equipment in the East Timor operation,” an evident absurdity given the armaments available, not to speak of the direct reports of the invasion. Gwertzman does not question the remark, but merely notes that “under United States law, a country is prohibited from using American equipment secured under the military sales program for operations not based on legitimate self-defense,” drawing no conclusions. Keeping close to the State Department line, Gwertzman describes the background as follows:

When Portugal withdrew from East Timor in 1975, a civil war broke out between leftists seeking independence; pro-Indonesian troops intervened and are believed to have effectively crushed the so-called Fretilin movement. Last July East Timor was incorporated into Indonesia.

Comparing this with the facts, the civil war was not between leftists seeking independence, and Portugal withdrew during, not before, the civil war. Furthermore, and more important, it was not “pro-Indonesian troops” that intervened but rather the Indonesian army. And still more important because of the policy consequences, even the State Department did not believe that the Indonesian army had effectively crushed the resistance, as we see from Kenney’s testimony in the hearings already cited. What is more, the report by Dunn, which was evidently available to Gwertzman, maintained that resistance continues and that “Fretilin troops have been joined by UDT and Apodeti supporters and their extensive guerrilla operations seem to have limited effective Indonesian control to no more than 20% of the territory of East Timor” (*March Hearings*, pp. 31-32), a point that Gwertzman does not mention. The point is significant. For as we have noted, the pretense that whatever unfortunate events may have occurred, now it is all over, has been used throughout by the U.S. government as justification for its military and diplomatic support for Indonesian aggression with its continuing large-scale atrocities.

In short, Gwertzman’s account satisfies all the state’s requirements for a “newspaper of record.”

As these references indicate, despite the consistent distortion of the facts in the service of U.S. propaganda, enough information was available to alert people concerned with human rights that something quite extraordinary might have taken place with tacit or direct U.S. backing, and that these terrible events might be continuing.

But the story quickly died. The *New York Times* interviewed Dunn, but ran nothing. There were scattered news stories, before and since. AP reported from Canberra that six members of the Australian Parliament (Labor) sent a report to the international relations

committee of the House of Representatives alleging that possibly 100,000 had been killed and asking it to investigate the charges.¹⁶⁹ The AP report—typical for the U.S. press—repeated the Indonesian propaganda line concerning the invasion (“Indonesia annexed the eastern half of Timor island, which is in the Indonesian archipelago, last July after a civil war in which Indonesian forces helped a pro-Indonesian faction defeat a faction favoring independence”), but the report did at least mention the charges and also the *Dunn Report* which was submitted at the same time to Congress. The *New York Times* ran a 9-line Reuters dispatch (1 March 1977) on a petition to President Carter by 94 members of the Australian Parliament “charging atrocities by Indonesian troops” and asking Mr. Carter “to comment publicly on the situation in East Timor”—naively no doubt, in view of the role played by Indonesia in the U.S. system.¹⁷⁰ But 9 lines was evidently considered too much for a topic of such meager interest. The story did not make it to the *New York Times* index because it was deleted from the Late City Edition, which is the newspaper of record for microfilm; *Times* editors and correspondents are much too busy seeking evidence of Communist atrocities to bother with the possible massacre of 100,000 Timorese at the hands of a U.S. client using United States arms.

Robert Shaplen, the Asia correspondent of the *New Yorker*, commented briefly on East Timor in his “Letter from Indonesia,” December 12, 1977. According to his reconstruction of history, “Indonesian troops intervened, somewhat crudely and clumsily, in December of 1975, in a war for independence which the East Timorese were ostensibly waging against Portugal.” The idea that the East Timorese were fighting Portugal is a novel contribution, but the reference to the massacre of perhaps tens of thousands of people as a somewhat crude and clumsy intervention is about par for the course for the Free Press. Shaplen continues: “the so-called Fight for Freedom had turned into a civil war among five factions, one of which, the left-wing Fretilin, objected strenuously to the manner in which Indonesian troops moved in to take over the former colony.” Comment seems unnecessary. “According to neutral observers,” Shaplen continues, “some ten thousand East Timorese, including many civilians, were killed by the Indonesian forces...” In fact, “neutral observers”—Dunn for example, and others to whom we return, who are in fact not “neutral” but pro-Indonesian or anti-FRETILIN—have consistently given figures in the range of 50-100,000 killed, and only the U.S. State Department has offered estimates of “some ten thousand” killed. Shaplen’s reference to “neutral observers” suggests that he is simply passing “information” from some U.S. government contact, not an untypical technique on the part of the more unscrupulous correspondents. Shaplen then explains that the estimated 600 FRETILIN guerrillas “control parts of the forbidding countryside, with

the help of thousands of ordinary villagers whom they induced, by force or persuasion, to take to the hills with them”—that FRETILIN might have genuine popular support for its resistance to Indonesian aggression is excluded on doctrinal grounds. He concludes finally that the Indonesians “don’t seem particularly perturbed by the criticisms” that they receive from “many Third World nations,” which is natural, given the support they receive from the powers that count and from journalists of the calibre of Robert Shaplen; and Suharto has announced that “on December 31st, the Army will start a new campaign against the guerrillas,” a matter that is of little concern to this observer or his colleagues in the Free Press. We discuss below the consequences of this “new campaign,” as experienced by the people whose fate Shaplen so lightly dismisses.

One final example of the kind of report that occasionally graces the pages of the U.S. press is a Reuters dispatch from Dili, based on a guided tour, in the *Los Angeles Times* (27 September 1978), explaining that “although the scars of the bitter civil war that preceded the merging of East Timor into Indonesia are still visible on its buildings, this little seaside capital seems to have recovered surprisingly well from its ordeal.” The discussion of the “civil war” continues as follows: “After the Portuguese colonial rulers departed in December, 1975, pro-Indonesian forces, later aided by regular Indonesian troops, defeated left-wing Fretilin independence guerrillas in an eight-month civil war.” But now things are quite happy under the peaceful rule of “Gov. Arnaldo dos Reis Araujo, who spent 29 years in jail as a subversive element under Portuguese rule” (see note 88, above). Again, comment is hardly required.

A rare exception to the general tendency to bury the issue as quickly as possible is a report from Washington by Richard Dudman.¹⁷¹ Dudman notes correctly that “amid all the talks about human rights, the country with perhaps the worst record has been getting increasing amounts of economic and military aid from the Carter administration.” He discusses Indonesia’s horrendous record with regard to political prisoners and reports that Indonesia has been placed by Carter’s policymakers in a “not-to-be-criticized” category because of the “bonanza enjoyed by American oil companies and multi-national corporations since the present military regime came to power in 1965,” citing Kohen’s *Nation* article (see note 80). Turning to the Indonesian invasion, he points out that “aggression was thus converted into suppression of an insurgency, and continuing U.S. military aid could have a facade of legality.” Dudman’s report, unique to our knowledge in its willingness to cite crucial sources that are beyond the pale for establishment journalism—for example, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of East Timor that has participated in UN debate—and to consider the U.S. role, suffices to show that it was not

beyond the capacity of correspondents and commentators to investigate the Timor issue, had their ideological and institutional constraints allowed them to do so.

The congressional reaction to Dunn's testimony was even more appalling than the unconcern in the press. Chairman Fraser apart, most of the questioning was hostile and abusive. Rep. Burke attacked Dunn's credibility, asking "under whose auspices are you here in the United States" (unfortunately for Burke, the answer was that his sponsors were relief agencies supported by Catholic Relief and the Australian Council of Churches) and dismissing his testimony as "hearsay" and "allegations you don't know any more about," whereas "our job...is for us to try to get the truth, not just hearsay or not just talk." Dunn's testimony was indeed "hearsay." As he stressed, he was not himself an eyewitness to Indonesian atrocities during a period when Timor was closed to all outsiders, including even the International Red Cross, and he therefore urged vainly that direct witnesses be called to check the accuracy of his reports. Burke's standards, we need hardly add, are never invoked in the case of alleged atrocities committed by enemies of the state for which he serves as a minor propagandist.

Rep. Goodling (see note 128) went still further, beginning his interrogation by saying that "if I would say I am happy that you are here I would not be telling the truth...I wish you had not been invited because of the political implications." He insinuated that Dunn was repeating FRETILIN propaganda and dismissed Indonesian atrocities as "some indiscretion of the part of a certain unit and they were called on the carpet for that. They were removed. That is past history." He also cited Indonesian claims that Dunn "is vindictive because he has been expelled from East Timor," which Dunn denied. These questions exhausted the concerns of the members of the committee, apart from Fraser and a brief intervention by Rep. Meyner. Goodling later referred to "the fairy tales and the fiction by Jim Dunn"¹⁷² (an attempt at "humor," he later claimed), and dismissed "this Jim Dunn bit here" as contrary to his experience in the staged tour noted earlier.¹⁷³ Goodling's further remarks consist of apologetics relying on Indonesian propaganda, combined with pleas that "I am accused of trying to be too consistent and too realistic...I say all the time that if we are going to talk about human rights one place, let us do it all the places."¹⁷⁴ The spectacle was generally disgraceful, and, as noted, contrasts remarkably with the eagerness to seize upon any scrap of evidence of abuses committed by those who have freed themselves from U.S. control, a matter to which we will return in Volume II.

There is substantial evidence corroborating Dunn's testimony based on his extensive interviews with anti-FRETILIN refugees in Portugal. In the *Dunn Report* (p. 108), it is

noted that an Indonesian church official who visited East Timor in September, 1976 had been skeptical about a massacre reaching a level of 10% of the population (60,000 people) but added that “when I asked the two fathers (priests) in Dili, they replied that according to their estimate the figure of people killed may reach to 100,000.” “This figure certainly does seem exaggerated,” Dunn comments, “but it nevertheless came from the Church in East Timor which is more likely to make a frank and objective assessment of the overall social situation than the other authorities involved in the territory.” Dunn himself regards the most accurate figure of those massacred as between 50,000-60,000 after the first year of war, and cites various estimates to that effect.

Among those who have offered figures in this range is Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik, as briefly noted in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (15 April 1977). A fuller account appears in the Australian press. The *Melbourne Age* (1 April 1977) quotes Malik as saying that “50,000 people or perhaps 80,000 might have been killed during the war in Timor, but we saved 600,000 of them.” Australian state radio commented that “The [U.S.] State Department is clearly embarrassed by Adam Malik’s statement that the number killed in East Timor might have been as high as 80,000.” The Washington Bureau of Australian radio tried to obtain a reaction from the State Department to the question of how Malik’s estimate relates to their own figures of 2-3000 or perhaps 10,000 killed, but received no answer for 24 hours. A State Department official finally said that they had been unable to obtain information on the Malik statement from Jakarta but “if it is true that Malik said this he is wrong.”¹⁷⁵ Nothing about any of this seems to have appeared in the United States.

An AAP-Reuter dispatch from Jakarta in the *Canberra Times* (1 April 1977) quotes Malik as follows, referring to killings in the “civil war”:

The total may be 50,000, but what does this mean if compared with 600,000 people who want to join Indonesia? Then what is the big fuss. It is possible that they may have been killed by Australians and not us. Who knows? It was war.¹⁷⁶

The claim that Australians may have been responsible for the killings in East Timor was apparently too much even for the U.S. State Department, generally a loyal purveyor of Indonesian propaganda; it is not known to have publicized this allegation. Putting it aside, Malik’s admission that the total killed may be 50,000 or perhaps 80,000—about 10% of the population, but no big fuss—is of some significance. The silence accorded it in the Western press contrasts interestingly with the massive publicity accorded an alleged admission of atrocities by a high Cambodian official, which appears to be a propaganda fabrication; see Volume II, chapter 6.

The occasional lapses into veracity on the part of its Indonesian client have been a constant embarrassment to the U.S. government, which understands more clearly the need for *consistent* duplicity, particularly in a period of pretended concern for “human rights.” While the media can be trusted to stay fairly close to the party line, leakage is always possible in a system that lacks overt totalitarian controls, and it may prove embarrassing if the Indonesian government speaks out too openly about the scale of its massacres. Hence the State Department’s concern over Malik’s straightforward admission, though the Department need not have been concerned in this case, since the U.S. media respected the need for silence. Similar problems arise regularly because of the legislation requiring the State Department to submit “human rights” reports to Congress. As we observe throughout this volume, this legislation requires constant deception since obvious problems would arise for an administration that preaches about human rights if the truth were to be told about the actual practices of its client states. Sooner or later, some journalists might comment on the fact that the “human rights administration” is indeed “adding blatant hypocrisy to earlier malevolence,” as Thomas Franck had warned (see p. 174, above). In the case of Indonesia, the problem was squarely faced in the first of the State Department attempts to conform to the legislation. Just as the State Department had to inform Australian state radio that the Indonesian foreign minister was wrong in his account of what Indonesian forces had accomplished in East Timor, so it brazenly tells Congress that “as many as 100,000 people were killed” in the 1965 coup in Indonesia, only a few months after the Indonesian chief of security, Admiral Sudomo, had estimated the number of people massacred at half a million.¹⁷⁷

The Melbourne *Age* reported from Canberra that “a highly confidential report handed to the Government claims that at least 60,000 Timorese have been killed since Indonesian forces invaded East Timor.”¹⁷⁸ This confidential document, reportedly prepared by independent relief workers who visited East Timor, and smuggled out of Indonesia, “is regarded by government officials as one of the most authentic first-hand accounts of the situation in East Timor since Indonesian troops invaded the Portuguese colony late last year.” The same report is cited by Michael Richardson, Southeast Asia correspondent for the *Age*, on the anniversary of the Indonesian invasion.¹⁷⁹ He states that this document “contains probably the most authentic information we are likely to get about the balance of forces and the state of popular feeling in East Timor, where access for outsiders is severely restricted by the Indonesian authorities.” He also attributes it to “independent relief workers” who visited Timor in September. “For anyone with an ounce of conscience—and that should include members of the Australian Government—the disclosures made

in the report must be profoundly disturbing,” he concludes, summarizing its contents.

The significance of this report increases when we discover that the source is not independent relief workers but rather Indonesian church officials who are strongly anti-FRETILIN and pro-“integration,” as the document indicates.¹⁸⁰ This fact underscores the significance of the estimate of 100,000 killed reported by the two Fathers in Dili to the visiting Indonesian Catholic officials. In the document, FRETILIN is described as a minority party, dominated by Communists from Lisbon University in Portugal—the position of official Indonesian propaganda, denied by independent sources (see above, p. 152 and note 86). But the Indonesian church officials warn that the alleged “desire to integrate with Indonesia is beginning to cool off because of bad experience with the occupying forces. (Stealing, robbery, burning houses, violating girls, etc.).” As an example, they cite a town in which 5,000 people allegedly welcomed “the Indonesian troops”¹⁸¹ whereas now there remain only 1,000 people in the village, the rest having joined FRETILIN in the mountains. “If this is an exceptional case, then it will be not so bad, but if this is a symptom of the real situation, then it is very bad,” they comment. They also report that of the 30,000 people in the occupied capital (Dili), 20,000 want to leave for Portugal while others are “with the Fretilin in the mountains so that in fact the real town people of Dili [sic] numbers only a couple of thousands not counting the Indonesian soldiers”—an interesting observation, given that Dili is widely regarded as the major area where there may have been initial support for the Indonesian invaders on the part of some segments of the population. They go on to describe how difficult it is “to start rehabilitation program because the people we intended to help are still in the mountains”—i.e., with FRETILIN. They describe the Indonesian-imposed East Timor Government as “without any authority,” “only a puppet government for the military commander,” and indicate that FRETILIN is “now” treating the people well (having “changed its tactic”) and is said to be so popular that it would win in a real referendum. They also report that “80 percent of the territory is not under direct control of the Indonesian military forces,” with 500,000 people “not under their control.” They also report rumors that FRETILIN is supplied (“men and material”) from Australia and describe how “villagers steal and rob” under FRETILIN control. The document is interesting as evidence of how the situation is viewed by Indonesian and Timorese Catholic circles strongly opposing FRETILIN and committed to “integration.”

This report was described as “significant and disturbing” by the Federal Parliament’s Legislative Research Service which examined it and prepared an assessment for MPs.

According to the assessment (cited above, p. 147), “information from earlier reports adds substantially to the mounting evidence that the Indonesians have been carrying out a brutal operation in East Timor,” involving “indiscriminate killing on a scale unprecedented in post-World War 2 history.”¹⁸²

Church sources have continued to plead for some help or at least attention from the West. A Catholic priest in East Timor managed to have a letter smuggled to Portugal by two nuns, former Dominican missionaries.¹⁸³ In this letter, dated November, 1977 and translated from Portuguese, the priest writes that from the December 7 invasion until February, 1976, Indonesian warships bombarded the hills around Dili 24 hours a day while helicopters and military aircraft flew over the country and “inland there are countless tanks and armored cars.” He estimates the Indonesian troop level at 50,000:

In December 76 there was an intense movement in the Dili harbor, unloading war materials and troops. From last December the war was intensified. The war planes dont stop all day long. There are hundreds of human beings who die daily. The bodies are food for the vultures. If bullets dont kill us we die from epidemic disease, villages completely destroyed....Fretilin troops who surrender are shot dead: for them there are no jails. The genocide will be soon: it seems it is next December.

Recall the testimony of Robert Oakley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, on March 23, 1977: The situation in Timor “today is fairly calm,” with a “low level of insurgency” and “very few civilian casualties,” surely no more of those occasional “excesses” which were “punished” in the early stages; most of the violence “took place during the period between August, 1975 and March, 1976.”¹⁸⁴ It is hardly conceivable that the U.S.-supplied Indonesian forces operate without U.S. knowledge. According to the U.S. legal code, “false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations” by government officials in the area of their jurisdiction constitute a crime punishable by heavy fines or imprisonment, a fact that might be brought to the attention of the highly selective contemporary advocates of “law and order.”¹⁸⁵ In this case, false representations by the State Department contribute directly to the crimes described by the despairing Catholic priest in Timor, sending his message to the void.

Returning to the letter smuggled to Portugal, the priest writes that the Bishop has resigned and church buildings have been destroyed. The economy, such as it is, has become one of “cabarets and brothels”—reminiscent of Saigon afflicted by the U.S. plague. The people oppose integration, but those “controlled by the Indonesians are like mild sheep that you take to the abattoir because of the oppressive character of the Indonesians”—an image that may also arouse memories in a Western conscience now intrigued by another holocaust that aroused little concern or reaction when it might have mattered. Timor was not “liberated from ‘communism.’ It was given to islamic

indonesians.”

The latter comment evoked a response in Australia. “AntiChristian elements supported by the military were openly persecuting Christians and the Church in East Timor, a Federal Liberal MP [Michael Hodgman] said yesterday,” the press reported.¹⁸⁶ “It appalls me that we can be so hypocritical and so morally apathetic,” he said, referring to the letter from the Catholic priest, which has somehow entirely escaped the keen and inquiring eye of the U.S. press.

The priest’s letter ends with an appeal for help:

Do something positive for the liberation of the Timor people. The world ignores us and it is a pity. We are on the way to a genocide. Till the end of December the war is to exterminate. All the valid youth of Timor is in the bush. The indonesians only control villages in a radius of one to two kilometers. Ask the justice loving people to save Timor and pray to God to forgive the sins of the people of Timor.

The appeal was in vain. The “justice loving people” of the West to whom the priest’s appeal was addressed were spared the pain of reading it. Western governments and the Free Press cannot be troubled by the actions of an important business partner and source of needed raw materials; their outrage is confined to offenders who threaten disturbance of the Free World system. Apart from the minuscule left-wing press, we know of no more attention to this letter in the U.S. than to other evidence of genocidal acts of our loyal ally, certainly no expression of indignation.¹⁸⁷

Australian Labor Parliamentarian Ken Fry published extracts from a letter of a resident in Dili, also apparently from Catholic sources.¹⁸⁸ The letter appeals to the recipient to “tell my son that for nothing on this earth should he return to Timor. I would rather die without seeing him again than to know that he had returned to this hell.” He describes an open-air Mass conducted in Dili by the apostolic Nuncio of Jakarta in October: “The ceremony was responsible for a great wave of emotion to evolve, made manifest in the tears, the cries, and in the sobbing of the orphans, the widows, and the forsaken, so much so that the Mass was interrupted for a quarter of an hour....It would certainly have been difficult to find some one from amongst all of these people who had not had a relative killed, or unheard of, or a prisoner in one of the Indonesian dungeons...Timor is no longer Timor; it is nothing but an oppressed worm.” In the streets of Dili one sees no one but Indonesian soldiers and Chinese: “there are very few Timorese for the majority is either in the forest, dead or in jail.” Most government personnel have been sent to Jakarta, “And in the meantime, their wives, who have been left behind, are systematically raped by the Indonesian soldiers who do as they please, taking no heed of their superior officers.” Again the letter ends with a plea:

Is the free world going to continue to pretend to ignore the drama of Timor? And will we have to go on watching the sad sight of the Government of our country shaking off the shackles of responsibility? Let there at least be a little respect for the suffering of so many innocent people!

It should be noted that much of the cited material on Indonesian atrocities derives from elements of the small urban elite that were initially disposed to accept Indonesian “integration,” some with resignation. The bulk of the population is rural, non-Christian, voiceless here as elsewhere, and generally disregarded.¹⁸⁹

Jill Jolliffe, reporting from Lisbon, presents another letter smuggled from East Timor telling of “a continuing ‘hot’ war in the mountains, and...widespread starvation, disease and death.” The letter was not written for publication, but is a personal letter to friends, “and is thus an unselfconscious personal account of life in Timor as the writer sees it” (Jolliffe). The letter, published in the *Nation Review* (4-10 August 1978) describes the situation as of late 1977 and 1978. It tells of family and friends, one who had a baby “born in the confusion of the bombardment, when they were forced to go to the bush...for almost two months,” others whose children had died of starvation “in conditions tragic enough.” “As they proceeded in front of the bombing and shooting, only those who could survived. The wounded and dead were abandoned and left for the dogs.” Still others “were driven from their home by Indonesian forces, supported by bombing,” in January, 1978. “Many elements of the population were killed under inhuman conditions of bombardment and starvation....The waters of the river were filled with blood and bodies. Great was the tragedy people endured during their escape. Husbands, fathers, brothers and abandoned wives, sons and brothers, all in the same agony.” Other relatives mentioned “are very thin, skeletons, from the bad times they had in the bush. That they did not die is a miracle. The time they spent in the bush has left them sad and emotional, reflecting on the drama that the Timorese people suffer in the bush: hunger, nakedness, sickness, the continual pounding of bombing and shooting.” The letter continues:

Pray much for us. The war will last indefinitely. Twelve search bombers effect a daily bombardment. The war in the south, near the sea, pounds the earth with artillery fire. The war is conducted with armoured cars numbering in the hundreds and the support of the army, of around 70,000 men in operations in all the territory....¹⁹⁰ But these truths are hidden from the outside world. The ICRC is forbidden to enter Timor also, as any foreign delegation must be authorised by the Jakarta government....We are threatened by illness and disease, as until now we don’t have preventative vaccines (after three years of war!) Medicines are rare. Pray for us that God will quickly send away this scourge of war. The mountains shake with the bombardment. The earth talks with the blood of the people, who die miserably...

The writer, presumably a member of the educated elite, is describing the situation long after the war has ended and the population is now being “protected” by the Indonesians from the depredations of the fierce Marxist guerrillas, according to the version approved in the West, where the industrial powers, great and small, are eagerly seeking to sell arms

to Indonesia so that they too can participate in these glorious accomplishments,^{[191](#)} while the Free Press maintains its silence. Though again, not entirely. Recall Robert Shaplen's breezy commentary on the impending invasion of December, 1977 (pp. 195-96, above). The letter we have just reviewed describes its consequences.

The *Australian* (8 October 1977) carried a UP dispatch from Singapore reporting that "30,000 Indonesian troops are still roaming East Timor slaying men, women and children in an attempt to end the persistent but hopeless liberation war." The report is based on the account of French photo-journalist Denis Reichle of *Paris Match*, who was deported from Timor after his arrest by Indonesian soldiers when "he was photographing West Timoreans dancing and cheering around a military truck carrying scores of corpses which were paraded through the garrison town of Atambua as slain communists from East Timor." His cameras and film were destroyed, including the results of a six-day visit to a mountain retreat of FRETILIN in East Timor. Reichle gives "a safe estimate" of 70,000-75,000 East Timorese killed by the Indonesians in 18 months of combat. The Indonesians, he reports, do not seek combat with FRETILIN forces but "were 'systematically wiping out' the populations of villages known or suspected to be Fretilin supporters and destroying Fretilin supply lines and sources." "He said Catholic missionaries, led by the Bishop of Atambua [West Timor], were the only voices in Timor trying to stop the 'systematic killing-off of East Timorese'." The Bishop, he said, "had been trying to get an interview with Indonesia's President Suharto for 2 1/2 months, but his requests had so far been ignored." He reported that "a German priest had been driven insane by the constant killings in his area."

Unable to provide food and medical treatment to a population of half a million under the circumstances described, FRETILIN has been encouraging refugees to move to Indonesian-controlled areas, Dunn reports: "It was therefore not surprising to learn that many of the population were encouraged by Fretilin to return to towns and villages under Indonesian control."^{[192](#)}

It is interesting to see how this population movement is interpreted in the U.S. press in one of its rare references to Timor. (Recall the review of diminishing *New York Times* coverage, p. 171 above). Henry Kamm, the *New York Times* specialist on Communist atrocities in Southeast Asia,^{[193](#)} reported that "foreign sources give credence to Indonesian reports of a heavy flow of refugees to regions firmly in Government hands." Explaining this refugee flow, Kamm describes the deteriorating situation in the mountain areas where "scattered Fretilin groups" continue their hopeless fight, "seemingly destined to die by

attrition”:

The diminishing of supplies of the Fretilin guerrillas appears to have caused them to lose much of their hold over the significant part of the population of about 600,000 whom they have forced to live in regions under their control.

Now they can be “protected by the Indonesian Government,” in the words of the State Department spokesman. (See above p. 184). These characterizations recall the standard reporting style from Vietnam about “Viet Cong control” over parts of the population who had to be liberated and protected by the U.S. It is hardly imaginable that the distinguished correspondent of the *New York Times* would report the observation by Denis Reichle after his brief visit to East Timor: FRETILIN forces “are simply East Timorese who would rather die fighting than submit to what they consider to be Indonesian slavery.”

The *Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning specialist on refugees in Asia does not provide the source for his insight into the minds of the refugees fleeing from the regions where they have been “forced to live” by the “scattered Fretilin groups.” In his reporting on Communist powers, refugee reports—often second or third hand, or transmitted by prisoners locked in cages under guard—are grist for the Kamm mill, as we shall see in Volume II. But for Indonesia and East Timor, Indonesian officials will suffice. Without any qualification or apparent check, Kamm quotes General Ali Murtopo, Indonesia’s Information Minister and the person in charge of the early stages of the Indonesian invasion,¹⁹⁴ as “explain[ing]” that the lack of security that requires Indonesia to keep foreigners away is not caused by FRETILIN forces (which are supposed to be virtually nonexistent according to the Indonesia-U.S.-*New York Times* propaganda line) “but from anti-foreign feelings among Timorese, the origin of which he did not explain. ‘When they see a foreigner they have a prejudice and would make moves that make trouble,’ he said.” It is so difficult to comprehend the inscrutable Asian mind.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps General Murtopo is also Kamm’s source for the insight that the refugees are fleeing FRETILIN oppression.

The device of relying on the Indonesian military is not a monopoly of the *New York Times*. In fact, it is common throughout the Free Press. To cite another case, Reuters reports from Jakarta on the imminent collapse of FRETILIN in October, 1978.¹⁹⁶ The report is based on statements by Indonesian military commanders, presented—as usual—as unquestioned fact. Citing these sources, the report expresses deep humanitarian concern over “the plight of thousands of villagers still under FRETILIN control or in refugee camps,” in particular, those who “are afraid to leave the mountains into which they had been forced from their homes to grow food for FRETILIN.”

Reference to FRETILIN “control” over the people who are “forced to live” with them

or “forced to grow food for them,” as contrasted with Indonesian “protection” of them, is in fact standard in the Free Press and government pronouncements (assuming that these can be distinguished), as was comparable rhetoric in the case of Vietnam. Those who trouble to exercise their democratic right to petition their elected representatives are treated to similar intellectual fare. In response to a letter to Vice President Mondale, Hodding Carter III, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs and Department Spokesman for the State Department, wrote that “with respect to East Timor, sporadic fighting continues between Indonesian forces and Fretilin remnants, but we have no information to substantiate charges of a pattern of atrocities by Indonesian troops....The latest reports available to us indicate that some 60,000 persons have voluntarily left areas in which they were exposed to some degree of Fretilin control or pressure and moved into territory secured by Government forces.”¹⁹⁷ It might have been written by Henry Kamm himself; or by General Ali Murtopo—again, assuming that there is a difference.

Kamm reports that “Jakarta’s military forces are still fighting an anti guerrilla war throughout the eastern half of the island,” though the guerrillas have no hope of success. “Their [the guerrillas’] international backing appears to be limited to highly vocal groups of Australian leftwing students who have made of eastern Timor an issue similar to Vietnam, with Indonesia playing the American role.”¹⁹⁸

Kamm’s comparison between the opposition to Indonesia’s exploits in Timor and the Vietnam War is illuminating. In fact, though this has escaped the attention of the *Times* Southeast Asia correspondent, the international protest over Timor also includes the majority of the states in the United Nations—though this may be irrelevant, since they are exercising that “tyranny of the majority” that has been so deplored in U.S. commentary on the UN ever since it became difficult for the United States to pull the strings. Furthermore, the conference of non-aligned nations in Sri Lanka in August, 1976 added East Timor to a list of “colonial territories” in need of self-determination and “speedy independence,” over bitter opposition from Indonesia and well after the U.S. had recognized “integration” as an irrevocable fact.¹⁹⁹

This support from the non-aligned nations was reiterated at the Belgrade meeting of summer, 1978, which once again affirmed the right of the East Timorese to self-determination, over the objections of Indonesia and a number of other countries that entered “reservations.”²⁰⁰ It also has included major segments of the Australian labor movement.²⁰¹ As we have noted, even the *New York Times* took note of the petition to President Carter on the part of the majority of members of the Australian Parliament,

though this inadvertent error was quickly rectified; see p. 194, above.²⁰² Apart from the majority of states of the United Nations, the non-aligned nations (which constitute the majority of the world's population) and the majority of the Australian Parliament and trade union movement, the protest over Indonesian actions has included substantial elements of the Australian press and church circles and even a few misguided souls in Europe or the United States who have not been so successfully brainwashed as the *Times* Pulitzer prizewinner.

To be sure, a precise logician might note that Kamm spoke of “international backing” for guerrillas resisting the Indonesian invasion while the protests are over the invasion and its aftermath; there is a difference, though such standards of accuracy, while relevant to serious reporting, hardly bear on this case. The distinction is one that the *Times* and its colleagues elsewhere have never been able to master in the case of opposition to U.S. aggression and atrocities in Vietnam; such opponents were invariably labelled “supporters of Hanoi,” at least if their opposition was on principled grounds.²⁰³

Returning from the *New York Times* to the real world, many Australian political figures have repeatedly condemned the Indonesian atrocities. Labor representative Ken Fry, who has been a consistent opponent of Indonesian aggression, alleged that the government had confidential information that up to 80 Timorese are being killed daily by Indonesian troops and that if the slaughter continued, “another 25,000 casualties would have to be added to the 50,000 dead already conceded by the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Malik.” He cited infant mortality rates of 50% and lack of medical supplies, a situation which, along with the “slaughter,” was “placing in jeopardy the future of the Timorese people.”²⁰⁴ Another one of those “highly vocal leftwing students” who are making an issue of Timor is Michael Hodgman of the Liberal Party, who describes himself as “staunchly anti-communist,” so much so that he has been described as “the worst Red-baiter” in the House of Representatives. He mentioned this in response to “a massive campaign,” of which Kamm’s absurd remark is one small part, “to brand any person concerned about East Timor as ‘pro-Fretilin’ and therefore, ‘pro-communist’”; he adds that “one could hardly call the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, headed by Bishop Mulkearns..., a ‘leftist’ organization.” Hodgman writes:

For us, as Australians, to bury our heads in the sand and turn our backs on what is alleged to have occurred, would be a gross act of national moral cowardice. We would be degrading Australia, and future generations would have to bear the same shame and disgrace which fell upon those citizens of nazi Germany who turned a blind eye to Auschwitz by the simple process of saying to themselves: “It does not exist—it has not occurred”...The ghosts of the dead will haunt each and every one of us who seeks solace in silent acquiescence.²⁰⁵

How much more true is this of U.S. congressmen, journalists and the public, given the direct U.S. role in implementing the aggression and building a wall of silence around it. More recently Hodgman charged in Parliament that between 30-40,000 people have died in East Timor because defoliants destroyed their crops.^{[206](#)}

In this connection, Rep. Donald Fraser wrote a letter to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on December 8, 1977, in his capacity as chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, in which he stated: “We recently received a reliable report that Indonesian forces have been using chemical sprays on crops in areas under Fretilin control and that U.S.-manufactured planes, the OV-10s, are being used to spread these chemicals...We have also received reliable reports that Indonesian troops are engaged in indiscriminate killings in areas under Fretilin control.” A response from Douglas J. Bennet, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, states (surprise!) that “we believe the report [of defoliation] is erroneous” and that “in regard to your other queries, we have received no information to indicate that Indonesian troops are engaged in indiscriminate killings in areas under Fretilin control.” The information reviewed above, for example, as well as that to which we return, is so esoteric that State Department intelligence and other intelligence agencies are quite unable to discover it, just as it lies beyond the reach of the Free Press and mainstream U.S. scholarship.

Returning to the “highly vocal leftwing students” who are making of East Timor “an issue similar to Vietnam,” the Australian Labor Party has repeatedly voiced its opposition to the Indonesian aggression. In July, 1977 it voted to endorse a cutoff of military aid to Indonesia and to recognize the Democratic Republic of East Timor (FRETILIN). To the best of our knowledge this resolution still stands. Six Australian parliamentarians, including Fry and Tom Uren, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, urged Representative Fraser to invite Dunn to testify, citing his refugee interviews and also a “confidential report from Indonesian Christian aid sources” (see above) which “documented widespread killings and destruction by Indonesian armed forces.”^{[207](#)} Uren was among the Australian troops captured in Timor after strong resistance to the Japanese invasion; others continued the struggle with the aid of the Timorese, who suffered bitterly for their contribution to the allied war effort and are now reaping the further benefits of their sacrifice.

We have already discussed Fry’s testimony before the UN Security Council in April, 1976. During the same Security Council sessions, the Secretary-General of the UN received a letter from José Martins, President of the extreme right-wing KOTA party, a participant in the early stages of the Indonesian invasion and one of the three Timorese

collaborators selected by Indonesia to report to the Security Council of the UN immediately after the December, 1975 invasion.²⁰⁸ He informed the Secretary-General that the entire delegation was forced to attend and “to read what the Indonesians had written.” Martins wrote that he had since “managed to escape from the evil Indonesian hands.” Originally a supporter of the Indonesian invasion, he quickly discovered that “many thousands of people” were machine-gunned as the Indonesian army ran amok and that apart from a few selected collaborators even the right-wing parties were not permitted to function. He referred to the FRETILIN report to the Security Council for details concerning the situation in Timor and appealed to the Secretary-General “to use your good offices to end the Indonesian presence in East Timor.”²⁰⁹

The media attention given to the defection of this leading collaborator—one of three Timorese handpicked by the Indonesian military—may be usefully compared with the treatment of Nguyen Cong Hoan, a minor political figure who escaped from postwar Vietnam and was accorded substantial coverage by Henry Kamm and others and invited as the sole witness for the July 26, 1977 Hearings of the Fraser Committee on Human Rights in Vietnam. (See Volume II, Chapter 4.) Martins, in contrast, was ignored by the Committee and in the press (virtually—see above p. 187). Not only is his defection far more significant from a political point of view, but, furthermore, nothing alleged to have taken place in Vietnam after the U.S. was expelled begins to compare with what has been reported concerning Timor, where the United States is a party to the slaughter. The comparisons, once again, are enlightening.

The hearings on human rights in Timor did not call as a witness anyone who spoke for FRETILIN, though such individuals (including José Ramos-Horta, former Minister of External Affairs and Information of the FRETILIN government and currently one of its international spokesmen) were available in New York and had been heard by the United Nations, which, under the “tyranny of the majority,” has departed from lofty U.S. standards. The congressional ban, however, was not against Timorese, but only against Timorese who were not Indonesian collaborators. Two Timorese selected by the Indonesians did testify at the congressional hearings, reporting, for example, that no Indonesian army units were in East Timor until after the July 1976 “integration,” when for the first time there were “units of uniformed people of security forces, the police and other units.” Prior to July, 1976, one of these witnesses reported, he “never saw any Indonesian who carried a weapon or wore a uniform.”²¹⁰ Such testimony is so radically inconsistent with the facts reported by all serious sources and accepted by the UN and even the U.S.

State Department, that one can reasonably conclude that these witnesses were subjected to Indonesian coercion, as Martins had indicated. Representatives of the Timorese resistance to Indonesian aggression would obviously be appropriate witnesses for a congressional hearing, as would the refugees who have indicated their desire to testify, if Timorese were regarded as members of the human race alongside victims of Communist oppression who are much more convenient objects of sympathy and concern on the part of human rights enthusiasts.

If, in fact, Timorese were accorded human status, the media too might listen to what FRETILIN representatives have to say. The estimates of casualties given above are from hostile sources primarily: Adam Malik, Indonesian Church officials, supporters of the UDT, priests, members of the elite. FRETILIN representatives have also given their estimates, but these have yet to reach Congress or the U.S. public. Mari Alkatiri of the FRETILIN Central Committee alleged in an interview in Paris that the number of deaths had passed 150,000. He also criticized the decision of the French government to sell sophisticated weapons to Indonesia which “will be put into operation against our civilian population, our women and children.”²¹¹ But this allegation and protest has not yet been noticed by the Free Press.

Alkatiri’s concern over French arms sales to Indonesia is quite appropriate. Although according to the State Department the war was effectively over in early 1976, one finds an occasional report in the loyal media revealing that this is far from true. A Western diplomat is quoted by George McArthur in the *International Herald Tribune* as saying that the Indonesians “are running out of military inventory. The operations on Timor have pushed them to the wall.”²¹² The fight against the guerrillas has “virtually exhausted” military supplies, according to this report, even though “the guerrillas now number only about 600 men.” McArthur does not explain how a war against 600 men can exhaust the military supplies of Indonesia, but perhaps one can draw some inferences that the Free Press does not allow. He reports that “arms salesmen from France, Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, West Germany and other places discretely woo the government—their way paved by various embassies.” He also claims, contrary to the reported facts, that the Carter administration is “slowing down international armament sales,” in particular to Indonesia.²¹³

The Free Press continues to mask the obvious significance of the flow of arms to Indonesia. The chief White House correspondent of the *New York Times* explained the “meaningful role” that has been achieved “in the making of foreign policy” by the

Administration's official liberal, Vice President Walter Mondale, referring to his visit to Jakarta to discuss "Indonesia's requests for additional military and economic assistance":

As the talks concluded, an Indonesian minister drew aside an American official. "These sessions have been really useful for us," he said. "Now we have someone at the Friday breakfasts who understands Indonesia's problems." The breakfast the Minister was referring to is the foreign policy review that President Carter conducts over coffee and Danish every Friday.

Mondale showed his understanding of Indonesia's problems while in Jakarta when he discovered that A-4 ground-attack bombers that Indonesia had requested "were indeed important to the Indonesians...Some hurried phone calls back to Washington and a few hours later, the Vice President was given the discretionary authority to grant the plane request if he felt adequate progress could be obtained on human rights. More talks with the Indonesians persuaded him that this was the case. Shortly before he left, he announced the plane sale."²¹⁴ The people of East Timor will thank him for his devotion to the cause of human rights.

The British are also wasting no time. In April, 1978, British Aerospace signed a 25 million pound contract with Indonesia for Hawk ground-attack / trainer aircraft, well-designed for counterinsurgency. The managing director commented: "The Indonesian contract is superb news so soon after our recent success in Finland. It is an important breakthrough into the South East Asia market, which is one of great potential."²¹⁵ Plenty of defenseless people to kill there.

The Southeast Asia correspondent of *Le Monde*, R.-P. Paringaux reported from Jakarta that Foreign Minister de Guiringaud had laid the basis for sales of military aircraft and other military equipment to Indonesia and for the eventual establishment of a plant for manufacture of light automatic weapons:

Asked about the position of France with regard to the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, M. de Guiringaud stated that if that question would again be raised at the next session of the United Nations, France would not place Indonesia in an embarrassing position in any manner. "*The government has so far abstained,*" reported the Minister, who judged his visit to Jakarta to have been "*satisfying in all respects.*"²¹⁶

The United States is also continuing, indeed apparently increasing its arms supplies to Indonesia. Imagine the reaction if the major powers had been pouring arms into Cambodia for use in internal repression.

The point deserves further comment. In France, as in the United States, there is great indignation over repression and atrocities in postwar Indochina, coupled with striking lack of concern for France's participation in continuing massacres elsewhere. Thus the representative of the French news bureau AFP, invited to a news conference at the UN on East Timor, November 30, 1978, declined to attend, stating that the French press is not

interested in East Timor. Similarly, Parringaux's report from Jakarta just cited led to no significant protest, to our knowledge. In dramatic contrast, a report a few weeks later by the same correspondent about repression in Vietnam became a cause celebre in France (indeed, in the U.S. press as well, though reports in *Le Monde* are rarely accorded such notice here, in particular, when they deal with U.S. crimes).²¹⁷ Similarly in France there has been a vast outcry about "autogenocide" in Cambodia.²¹⁸ But when the French foreign minister announces plans to sell arms to Indonesia and establish an arms manufacturing industry there while continuing to support Indonesian aggression, the response is far more muted, though there is little doubt about the consequences, and they have indeed been drawn quite explicitly in France—as distinct from the United States, where the media cover-up has been far more effective. Thus in mid-1976 the French press pointed out that the government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (FRETILIN) believed that "time is on its side" in the struggle against Indonesian aggression, because Indonesia would not be able to sustain its attack, given the severe costs.²¹⁹ But FRETILIN had not counted on the willingness of the Western powers, including those that have compiled such a notable record in Southeast Asia, to provide the material and diplomatic support that is required for Indonesian aggression and massacre to continue.

As we have noted several times, the reports of Indonesian atrocities that have reached the West and on occasion barely penetrated the barrier of silence and "ignorance" derive largely from sources that were anti-FRETILIN and in support of "integration" with Indonesia or initially willing to accept it. Information emanating from FRETILIN sources is excluded from the U.S. press or Congress as a matter of principle. There has been substantial information from such sources, much of it sent directly by radio from East Timor, but it has not been considered worthy of mention (in striking contrast, for example, to material smuggled out by Russian dissidents). In November, 1976 the conservative Fraser Government in Australia "decided to prevent Telecom, Darwin, from passing on telegrams from the Fretilin forces in East Timor. These Telecom messages are the only way in which the Australian people and the world can find out what is happening in East Timor."²²⁰ This decision, which "cuts off Fretilin's last official link with the outside world,...follows the seizure seven months ago of a mobile transmitter broadcasting to the Fretilin movement from near Darwin."²²¹ For the Western powers, it does not suffice that the servile press (outside of Australia) pays no attention to the sole regular source of information about Timor—can one conceive of a dispatch from the Timorese resistance in the *New York Times*?²²² —or to the pleas from priests and others for some concern over impending genocide? It is necessary to proceed further and to make sure that the voice of

those who dare to resist the depredations of a U.S. client state must be entirely stilled, so that even those “highly vocal leftwing students” who provide their sole “international support,” according to Henry Kamm, shall know nothing of their fate. Since even the International Red Cross has been barred from Timor,²²³ it is even more certain than before that what reaches any substantial audience in the West will be the kind of “information” produced by the Indonesian generals and loyally transmitted by the Henry Kamms of the international press.

Nevertheless, the voice of the resistance has not been completely stilled. Radio contact continues, contrary to allegations in the press.²²⁴

A UPI report from Sydney, June 19, 1978, cites a charge by Denis Freney, secretary of the Campaign for an Independent East Timor, that “the CIA has sent military advisers to help Indonesian troops battle guerrillas in East Timor.”²²⁵ Freney gave as his source a radio message received from FRETILIN in East Timor, reporting an invasion by 15,000 fresh troops who arrived in May, 1978. The report from East Timor was quoted in a press release by José Ramos-Horta in New York, July 12, 1978:

American military advisers and mercenaries fought alongside Indonesian soldiers against FRETILIN in two battles in Lekidoe area, 10 miles south of Dili, on June 13, and in the Remexio village, eight miles south-east of the capital, on June 21 and 22. In the meantime, American pilots are flying OV-10 Bronco aircraft for the Indonesian Air Force in bombing raids against the liberated areas under FRETILIN administration.

The same press release also cites a report from the same source “that military observers of an ASEAN country have been to East Timor during the month of December last year to watch Indonesian military operations against FRETILIN forces in the village of Ainaro.” On the same day, Ramos-Horta addressed a letter to UN Ambassador Andrew Young citing the same reports, and appealing to him, “with faith in your sense of justice and your record as a freedom-fighter for civil liberties in this country...[and]...your profound convictions in human dignity and liberty [which] are an interpretation of the feelings of the American people at large...to help stop the unjust American intervention in East Timor.”

This appeal was unnoticed by the Free Press, and had no discernible effect on or through Ambassador Young.

There have been occasional reports by journalists permitted highly controlled tours by the Indonesian government, but very few. The first appears to have been Richard Carleton, who spent six days in East Timor in July 1977.²²⁶ He reports that wherever he went on his “conducted tour” he was “surrounded by two concentric circles of men from the civil defense forces.” He did, however, manage “to give the slip to the dozen escorts, guards,

interpreters and hangers-on that the Indonesian government had provided” and “in a darkened room of a building on the outskirts of Dili” met someone whose “integrity is beyond reproach” and whose eyewitness account of Indonesian atrocities, which Carleton reports, was supported by another witness. “The voices of my informers quavered as they spoke, their hands trembled and they perspired freely.” Apart from describing to him a massacre that took place in December, 1975, his informants also told him “that here people are still dying of disease and malnutrition every day.” They estimated the total number killed to be in the neighborhood of 50,000. Carleton reports that in the streets of Dili, “about one person in five still wears a black armband of mourning.” He could see that “for those who survived the fighting the Indonesians have begun a full-scale Orwellian re-education program,” complete with indoctrination in the schools and signs reading “go to hell James Dunn” and similar slogans, most of them, however, written “in Indonesian, a language none of the local people speak, let alone write.” Meanwhile children sent to welcome him “kept up a continuous chant: ‘We are one nation, we are Indonesian’.” Carleton was less impressed than his colleagues reporting from Jakarta. He reports what he was told by Indonesian military commanders but also the current assessment of Western intelligence sources in Jakarta which estimated that one-third of East Timor is controlled by the Indonesians, one-third by FRETILIN, and one-third is no-man’s-land. He noted, for example, that the town of Remexio, 15 kilometers from Dili, was still under FRETILIN control, and even in Dili he found signs in the native language clandestinely painted by FRETILIN supporters who had heard of his arrival over radio Australia. To determine what was happening in Dili, Carleton reports, “the best one can do is to gather the odd eye-witness account from those not too terrified to talk”; or to translate into the style preferred in the West, from those who are now being “protected” by the Indonesians after having escaped from areas where they were “forced to live” by FRETILIN.

The Indonesian government apparently was not too happy with the results of this “conducted tour.” Journalists were barred for a year afterwards. In July, 1978, journalists were permitted to accompany General Suharto on a 24-hour visit to Dili, and in September, 1978, when the Indonesian government brought several foreign diplomats, including the U.S. Ambassador, for a three-day visit to sections of East Timor under their control, several journalists were in the party. A report by David Jenkins appears in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, datelined Remexio; by September, 1978 the Indonesian army had captured this town less than 10 miles from the capital city of Dili, which had been occupied in December, 1975.²²⁷ “In Remexio, as in most other towns,” Jenkins writes,

“the people are stunned, sullen and dispirited. Emaciated as a result of deprivation and hardship, they are struggling to make sense of the nightmarish interlude in which as much as half the population was uprooted.” The diplomats visiting Remexio “found bewildered residents drawn up in two rows, jiggling Indonesian flags and mouthing the words *merdeka* (freedom) to the prompting of local cheerleaders.” An East Timorese collaborator said:

These people are totally stunned by what has happened. Thousands died in this *kabupaten* (district). The people are shocked both by the severity of the killing and by the recent political changes. Four-fifths of them wouldn't know what they are doing. I could give them a Portuguese flag and they would wave it.

The town, Jenkins reports, was almost completely on the side of FRETILIN. Keeping to the standard Western version of events, Jenkins reports that for Remexio “the trauma began in 1975 when rival Timorese factions turned on one another in what was to become an especially horrifying civil war” (the standard misrepresentation, as we have seen). Attacked first by the UDT at the time of the brief civil war of August-September, 1975, according to Jenkins, Remexio “was to suffer even more severely at the end of the year and in early 1976 as Indonesian ‘volunteers’ let loose their full fury on Fretilin units dug in around the town.” Now the inhabitants “are undernourished and desperately in need of medical attention.” Many have come in from the surrounding hills where they barely survived on tapioca, leaves and poisonous berries. The children reminded one ambassador of “victims of an African famine.”

According to Timorese officials, Remexio is not unique and is, in fact, better off than other “transit camps” in the province. The Indonesian foreign minister, typically, blamed the poverty (worse than “any other part of Indonesia,” he said) on the legacy of the Portuguese—not entirely false, despite the cynicism. Church officials estimate that 500 refugees die each month of starvation in one district.

Indonesia has still not granted permission to the International Red Cross or other relief agencies to enter East Timor, though it is willing to accept aid for the dispirited people who remind visitors of “victims of an African famine.” But only on certain conditions: “Indonesia is looking for foreign aid for East Timor but the Foreign Minister, Professor Kusumaatmadja, who accompanied the party [of visitors], indicated the donor countries must acknowledge Indonesia’s sovereignty.”²²⁸ Aid will be accepted, in short, as a device to obtain international recognition for Indonesia’s aggression, so far withheld by most countries, though not by the United States, the chief accomplice.

In the UN debate of November, 1978 over East Timor, the representative of Sao Tome-Principe spoke of the East Timorese people “as hostages in their own territory.”²²⁹ The

cynicism of the Indonesian government on foreign aid confirms this judgment, as do other actions. Jill Jolliffe comments that the reference to the East Timorese is “indeed accurate”:

This is borne out by the attempts of several thousand East Timorese in Dili to emigrate to Australia. Despite an agreement by Australian immigration authorities to accept around 600 of these applicants—a small concession wrung out of Indonesia by the Australian government in reward for de facto recognition of Indonesian control in East Timor—the Indonesian government continues to obstruct the departure of these people.²³⁰

These facts too are considered unworthy of notice in Western countries that reserve their display of deep humanitarian concern for those who suffer from starvation, disease and oppression in the countries of Indochina.

The description of the stunned, dispirited, starving residents of Remexio brings to mind other pictures: for example, the Aché Indians who had “given up on life” in the government death camp so admired by a visiting *New York Times* reporter (cf. pp. 126-27, above) or those in the Protestant mission visited by Norman Lewis, where the chief attempted suicide when the missionary in charge withheld water from sick and starving children to teach them “the conception of corrective chastisement” that seemed “beyond their grasp” because of “some genetic defect” (cf. p. 140, above).

Jenkins writes of “this enormous humanitarian and development problem” with which Indonesia is “saddled...as a result of its takeover of East Timor in December, 1975,” referring in the now-familiar way to the Indonesian capture of Dili in the December invasion, later extended to a near-genocidal attack that apparently still continues, though Jenkins, on the authority of his Indonesian hosts, assures us that only 2-300 scattered FRETILIN guerrillas fight on. Perhaps some troubled German also wrote of the “enormous humanitarian and development problem” that the Nazis were “saddled with” in Poland. Even this level of concern appears to be beyond the U.S. press.

As a grim experiment, we have taken, in recent months, to asking audiences at political talks in the United States if they know in which continent Timor is to be found. Few have even heard the name. U.S. Indonesian clients can persist in their humanitarian endeavors with little fear that they will be impeded or called to account by their Western backers. Perhaps, when enough years have passed and a new Human Rights campaign is launched, thoughtful commentators will evoke some distorted memory of this holocaust as a testimonial to the new day that is dawning as the West turns over still another “new leaf” in its never-ending efforts to bring the message of humanism, freedom, and justice to benighted peoples.

But for the present, silence is deemed more appropriate. A letter to the liberal journal *Newsweek*, inquiring as to its failure to devote a word to the slaughter in East Timor,

elicited a response (5 December 1978) explaining that for the past 20 months the situation there has been “stable”: “with the responsibility of covering important developments from every corner of the globe each week...we cannot report on a stable situation,” the letter explained. The week the letter was sent, *Newsweek* had met this awesome responsibility with a cover story on electronic toys. The letter continues: “We have to wait until some event...brings the area into the spotlight of world attention,” for example, a “military offensive”—evidently the major offensive of December 1977 was below the threshold for media attention, as distinct from electronic toys. As for the constant bombardment and terror, the regular new offensives that would have exhausted Indonesian military supplies were it not for Western assistance, the scenes reminiscent of an African famine glimpsed by Western ambassadors, the atmosphere of a war zone in Dili, the anguished pleas of victims and refugees—none of this is newsworthy, since the situation is “stable.” Recall *Newsweek*’s profound concern over the “devastation” caused during the civil war, minuscule by comparison even if we were to accept the presentation in the skillfully edited *New York Times* report that *Newsweek* used as a source (see p. 153-156). Note also the emphasis on the obscurity of the events in East Timor, which is not in “the spotlight of world attention.” In contrast, atrocities, hunger and repression in postwar Indochina are continually newsworthy, because they remain “in the spotlight of world attention.” In short, Catch-22: first suppress the facts, then refuse to report them because they are not “in the spotlight of world attention,” while the glare of publicity ensures that material that can be used to teach the proper lessons remains “newsworthy.” *Newsweek* also adds that it is “even rumored” that “some guerrillas” remain, but again, the rumors cannot find space in a journal with such serious responsibilities.

With its resort to the concept of “stability,” *Newsweek* shows that it has learned the party line very well. By providing diplomatic and propaganda cover and a continuing flow of arms, the U.S. government has enabled its Indonesian client to slaughter at will, to annihilate the simple mountain people who continue to resist, to destroy their crops and drive them to “transit camps” where they sit in stunned silence like the remnants of another holocaust. But the situation is “stable,” in the sense of “stability” that has been devised by the U.S. government and the Free Press (see note 6). In the standard sense of U.S. propaganda, “stability” is just the right term to apply to East Timor for the 20-month period preceding this letter.

We conclude this survey by turning to the Human Rights Reports of the State Department.²³¹ In the March, 1977 report, covering the period when Indonesia launched its murderous attack, *there is no mention whatsoever of Timor*. The omission is rectified in

the 1978 Report, which deals with allegations of genocide in Timor as follows, *in toto*:

Questions have been raised concerning atrocities by Indonesian troops in East Timor in 1975 and 1976 prior to the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. The Indonesian Government withdrew and disciplined offending units guilty of individual excesses, but most of the human losses in East Timor appear to have occurred prior to Indonesia's intervention.^{[232](#)}

The last statement is a blatant lie. Note also the refusal to consider the substantial evidence, some of which we have reviewed, of massacres after the incorporation into Indonesia continuing to this day, and the qualified reference to the earlier period. For the period after mid-1976, State Department Human Rights specialists will not even grant that “questions have been raised.”

A study prepared by the Congressional Research Service at the request of Donald Fraser notes that the State Department estimate of fatalities is far below that of Dunn (or others, including Malik!) and reports that William Goodling—an outright apologist for Indonesia—“testified that Timorese and Indonesian sources estimated to him that 40,000-60,000 were killed in the period of civil conflict and the December, 1975-March, 1976 period of Indonesian intervention.”^{[233](#)} Recalling that perhaps a few thousand were killed prior to the Indonesian invasion, we can draw a simple inference as to the estimated casualties resulting from the invasion itself up to March, 1976.

We do not want to suggest that the State Department is unique in its profound show of concern over possible genocide in Timor. As we have seen, journalism and responsible scholarship do not lag behind. To cite still another case, two commentators associated with the *Asian Wall Street Journal* write in *Foreign Affairs* that Indonesia is a “ripe target” for those who might be concerned with human rights violations. There is no mention of Timor.^{[234](#)}

Press commentary on the 1978 State Department Human Rights Report is interesting. Bernard Gwertzman noted in the *New York Times* (February 10, 1978) that “the report was gentle on alleged atrocities in East Timor, asserting that most lives were lost before Indonesia's intervention in the former Portuguese colony.” Neither the *Times* reporter nor its editors felt any need to take note of the glaring falsity of this claim or to comment on the significance of the State Department whitewash, nor did they mention that the Carter Administration had been stepping up aid, including military aid, to Indonesia.^{[235](#)} Gwertzman is no less “gentle” than the State Department, as we see in his comparison of Indonesia and Cambodia:

In Indonesia, where thousands have been detained without trial after the Communists were crushed in 1965, there has been a decision to release them gradually. In Cambodia, the radical forces that took power in 1975 have allowed no real contact with the outside world. But millions are alleged to have been killed, forced into

exile or into bondage.

We return to Cambodia in Volume II, chapter 6. But note how the numbers “detained without trial” in Indonesia have been diminished, while the hundreds of thousands slaughtered have simply disappeared from the record.^{[236](#)}

East Timor is not the only territory subjected to U.S.-backed Indonesian terror. The *Melbourne Age* reports that “almost 9,000 people have died in two years of bitter guerrilla fighting in Irian Jaya—the forgotten ‘Timor’ on Australia’s northern doorstep.” The estimate is given by the “peasant army which has since the mid-1960s been waging a stone-age war against Indonesian control of the land that borders Papua New Guinea,” and which claims that 3,515 Indonesian soldiers and 5,269 Irianese villagers and guerrillas have been killed since January, 1976. “The figures are consistent with [Papua New Guinea] intelligence, according to reliable sources.” The *Age* reports that it has “been shown detailed documents covering more than 50 separate battles and six village bombing raids by Indonesia over the two-year period,” with “dates, places and precise figures for deaths and injury” which constitute “persuasive evidence of a sizeable and strong liberation movement...” The report is based on two weeks spent with the guerrillas by *Age* correspondent Mark Baker.^{[237](#)}

In a follow-up report on April 27, Baker gives a detailed account of a “movement of people in the sisterland of Papua New Guinea who live in the bold hope of winning an end to 15 years of Indonesian rule...a movement that has survived nearly a generation of poverty, hunger and bombardment” and has, on his account, given pride and hope in ways that “will never be fully comprehended by...Western standards” both to stone age tribes and to “young men who are now leaving the comfort of urban colleges and jobs to fight.” Their leader has so far refused Communist military aid in “the vain hope that the West will bring him guns.”

It would be unfair to say that the U.S. press has failed entirely to cover this struggle. In September, 1978 the foreign minister of West Papua, New Guinea’s Revolutionary Provisional Government was in New York, claiming that “we are fighting against Indonesia’s genocide against our people.” A report is carried in the Marxist-Leninist *Guardian* (New York, 20 September 1978), along with background discussion. The Free Press lives! Perhaps some day a reference to this liberation movement, which is giving pride and hope to the people, will make its appearance in an academic study of terrorism, that scourge of our age and one of the major problems facing civilized society.

A study of West Irian under Indonesian occupation by an Australian sociologist is

reviewed by Richard Franke in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*,²³⁸ giving a rare account of the liberation movement that has developed in “opposition to the brutality and exploitation of the Indonesian generals and their partners at PT Pacific Nickel,” 43 percent owned by the U.S. Steel Corporation, and other international corporations intent on exploiting the rich mineral potential of the territory, where Indonesia has imposed an “ethnic caste barrier...to promote use of the region as a place to which the most impoverished peoples of other Indonesian islands might emigrate,” among other humanitarian exercises.

A report from Melbourne in the *London Times* (27 July 1978) states that “Australia’s tangled relations with Indonesia have been exacerbated by the razing of a border village in Papua, New Guinea, allegedly by Indonesian forces.” Australia believes that “Indonesia has gone too far in its efforts to crack down on Irianese rebels” but is “even more concerned with keeping the diplomatic relationship healthy.” In the case of East Timor, “Australia was the only Western country to take any real interest in the takeover” and produced a “muted complaint” that was entirely ignored. But the current situation is more serious, in part because of suspicions “that Indonesia has territorial designs on Papua, New Guinea.” The *London Times* report continues: “The United States is now much more interested in Indonesia, not only because of the Administration’s preoccupation with human rights, but also because it is a big arms supplier to Indonesia.” The logic of the last comment is not obvious, given the way in which the “human rights preoccupation” has been spelled out in practice in the case of Indonesia, Timor, Iran, the Philippines, etc., but it is a testimony to the effectiveness of the U.S. propaganda system, at the very least. One does not wait with bated breath for stern U.S. action to influence Indonesia to terminate the bloodbaths on its borders, or the interminable repression within.

Constructive Terror

The U.S. global effort to maintain and enlarge the areas with a favorable investment climate has necessitated regular resort to terror, directly (as in the case of Indochina) and more often indirectly through subsidy and support for repressive clients. Bloodbaths and terror that contribute substantially to a favorable investment climate are “constructive” in the sense that they advance the end that clearly ranks highest in the priorities of Free World leaders. In such instances, therefore, human rights issues are set aside by right thinking people in the light of the contribution that such terror makes to “freedom” and “security”.¹

4.1 Indonesia: Mass Extermination, Investors’ Paradise

The huge massacres in Indonesia, 1965-1969, have a threefold importance. In the first place, they constitute a new phase in counterrevolutionary violence marked by resort to “mass extermination in an attempt to consolidate authoritarian power.”² Second, they provide the most revealing demonstration of the U.S. establishment’s response to a major bloodbath where the political results of the slaughter are regarded as “positive”.³ Third, since the reaction of responsible journalists and political leaders was enthusiastic,⁴ and the world protest at the mass killings was minimal, the Indonesian bloodbath set the stage as a viable model for lesser but still large-scale anti-communist pogroms in later years, as in Chile.⁵

The massacre in Indonesia followed an alleged Communist effort at a takeover in October, 1965, in which a small group of left wing army officers assassinated a half-dozen Indonesian generals. This “coup” was extremely convenient, providing the “long awaited legitimization” for the *real* coup and bloodbath that came as its aftermath. The term “mutiny” has been suggested as perhaps more appropriate than “coup” for the precipitating events of October, 1965, and its link to the Communist party is by no means established.⁶ The abortive coup or mutiny did, however, provide the military establishment with the excuse to destroy its only serious institutional rival: the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).⁷ The PKI was large and well organized, had a mass base, and its policies and interests were antithetical to those of the generals. The PKI opposed dependence on the U.S., to which the Indonesian military was already closely tied by ideology and growing technological dependency (arms supplies and training). And the PKI was sharply critical of the corruption and mismanagement of the military-dominated bureaucratic capitalism of the early 1960s, which was breaking new ground in looting and

shakedowns even before the post-1965 consolidation of military power. In any event, the army quickly established itself in power and proceeded to organize within a four-month period one of the most extensive and brutal slaughters in human history.⁸

The Indonesian coup and terror sequel had certain similarities with that of Brazil, which it followed by a year. The CIA had long been involved in Indonesian affairs, had participated in an unsuccessful regional rebellion in 1958 (an abortive Brazilian coup had occurred in 1955), and, along with the Pentagon, had supplied cash and political intelligence to the officer corps. Army-inspired anti-Chinese pogroms that took place in West Java in 1959 were financed by U.S. contributions to the local army commander. By the late 1950s the CIA and Pentagon both had built an extensive network of connections with the Indonesian military. As noted, the Indonesian coup was immediately preceded by a legitimizing “Communist coup” to which it was allegedly a response; the Brazilian junta and the sponsoring U.S. leadership could only claim Communist infiltration and bloodthirsty plans—which more than sufficed for the molders of U.S. public opinion, although perhaps more would have been needed to justify mass extermination. As in the case of Brazil, the Indonesian military officer corps had been built and trained by the U.S.; “one-third of the Indonesian general staff had some sort of training from Americans and almost half of the officer corps...[and] the American and Indonesian military had come to know each other rather well. Bonds of personal respect and even affection existed...”⁹ One of those closest to the U.S. military and most respected by them, General Nasution, achieved some notoriety by openly demanding the total extermination of all three million Communist party members, plus all their followers and sympathizers.¹⁰ One of the army leaders in the very forefront of the killing, Colonel Sarwo Eddie, had been a CIA contact man while serving in the Indonesian embassy in Australia.¹¹

In mid-November of 1965 Suharto formally authorized a “cleaning out” of the Indonesian Communist Party and set up special military teams to supervise this final solution. The army played a key role in this holocaust, doing a large part of the killing directly, supplying trucks, weapons and encouragement to paramilitary and vigilante death squads, and actively stimulating anti-Communist hysteria that contributed greatly to wholesale mass murder. A key part in stirring up a mood of butchery was played by media fabrications, which were concocted with a sophistication suggestive of outside assistance. Photos of the bodies of the dead generals—badly decomposed after three days in a well—were featured in all newspapers and T.V. broadcasts, with accompanying texts claiming that the generals had been castrated and their eyes gouged out by Communist women.

(The army later made the mistake of allowing official medical autopsies to be included as evidence in some of the trials; and the extremely detailed reports of the injuries suffered only mention bullet wounds and some bruises, no eye gougings or castration.) The cynically fabricated campaign was well designed to arouse panic about Communist sadism and thus to set the stage for the second largest holocaust of the twentieth century.

The mass killings began in late October 1965 in Central Java with the arrival there of the paratroopers, moved to East Java at the end of November as the paratroopers moved east, and on to Bali about mid-December, again correlated with a move of the paratroopers. Lists compiled by the military were given to right-wing Muslim groups, who were armed with *parangs* and transported in army trucks to villages, where they killed with bloody mutilation. Schoolchildren were asked to identify “Communists,” and many so identified were shot on the spot by army personnel, along with their whole families. Many people were denounced as “Communists” in personal disputes, and “on the basis of one word or the pointing of a finger, people were taken away to be killed.”¹² The killing was on such a huge scale as to raise a sanitation problem in East Java and Northern Sumatra, where the smell of decaying flesh was pervasive and rivers were impassable because of the clogging by human bodies.¹³

This slaughter was described by the anti-Communist Indonesia expert Justus M. van der Kroef as “a frightful anti-Communist pogrom” where, “it is to be feared, innocent victims of mere hearsay were killed” (as opposed, presumably, to the guilty Communist men, women and children who fully deserved their fate).¹⁴ In 1968 there was a renewal of mass executions, and in one single case in early 1969 army and local civic guards in Central Java “were said to have killed some 3,500 alleged followers of the PKI by means of blows of iron staves in the neck.”¹⁵ According to van der Kroef, it was a period of “endless and often arbitrary arrests, brutalization of prisoners, and an atmosphere of distrust in which exhibitions of violent anti-communism are believed to be the best way to convince suspicious local military of one’s *bona fides*.”¹⁶

The number killed in the Indonesian bloodbath has always been uncertain, but an authoritative minimum was established in October 1976 when Admiral Sudomo, the head of the Indonesian state security system, in an interview over a Dutch television station, estimated that more than 500,000 had been slaughtered.¹⁷ He “explained” to Henry Kamm of the *New York Times* that these deaths had been a result of an “unhealthy competition between the parties” who were causing “chaos”.¹⁸ Other authorities have given estimates running from 700,000¹⁹ to “many more than one million.”²⁰

For the period of the massacres, the *official* figures for people arrested, exclusive of the 500,000 or more “Communists” killed, is 750,000.²¹ AI estimated in 1977 that there were still between 55,000 and 100,000 political prisoners. Of the 750,000 arrested only about 800 have been brought to trial, usually by military tribunals, and usually receiving death sentences. Uncounted thousands died in prison of malnutrition and untreated illness. AI has “not found a single case of a prisoner not being found guilty.”²² Thus, tens of thousands of prisoners today

are held captive without trial, or used as servants by local military commanders, or exploited as forced labor, or subjected to an archaic policy of transportation to penal colonies. They are ill-treated by the authorities. The majority have now been held prisoner for more than 11 years without trial. Men, women, and children are held prisoner, arbitrarily and at the discretion of local military commanders.²³

Conditions in the Indonesian prisons have been and remain appalling and torture has been employed “systematically” in interrogation. According to AI:

Young girls below the age of 13, old men, people who were frail and ill, were not exempt from torture. It was used not only for interrogation, but also as punishment and with sadistic intent. Cases of sexual assault on women and extreme cruelty were reported to Amnesty International. Deaths from torture were frequently reported up till the end of the 1960s. At the present time, Amnesty International receives reports of cases of torture under interrogation. The worst cases are those of military officers and men suspected of left-wing tendencies, who are tortured by their fellow officers. The Air Force interrogation center in Jakarta is particularly notorious for its use of brutal and prolonged torture.²⁴

Meanwhile, this land of mass murder and huge concentration camps quickly became “a paradise for investors.”²⁵ The generals have followed the typical subfascist strategy of alliance with powerful foreign interests for the joint exploitation of the local markets, resources and people. The blind-growth development model was adopted, emphasizing rapid increases in investment and technology through foreign investment and expertise. The Foreign Investment Law of February 1967 provided the requisite tax and other incentives, and a major influx of foreign capital ensued, with the United States leading the way in mining, and the Japanese especially important in textiles. By 1973 foreign interests controlled 59% of the capital invested in forestry, 96% in mining, 35% in industry, 47% in hotels and tourism, and 33% in agriculture and fisheries.²⁶ The lifting of restrictions on imports and encouragement of foreign investment also led to substantial denationalization in sectors traditionally dominated by local enterprise—batik, textiles, beverages, foodstuffs, and cigarettes—a process hastened by the lack of capital access of local entrepreneurs in a system of privileged credit and restrictive credit policies.²⁷

New agricultural technologies, the monopolization of rural credit by large individual and corporate farmers, and the rise in price of agricultural land also resulted in massive dispossession of peasants and a greater redundancy of agricultural laborers, a fall in

agricultural wage rates, widespread hunger, and a widening gap between village rich and poor. Anderson notes that

...in the wake of the destruction of the PKI, the modest land-reform and crop-sharing legislation of the Sukarno years had become a dead letter. Much of the land redistributed in the early 1960s had reverted to its earlier owners by the early 1970s. Although the law provided for 50-50 shares in the crop between tenant and landlord, in many areas the actual ratio ran as high as 70-30 or even 80-20 in the landlords' favor. It was only too easy to brand any attempts to enforce the land-reform and sharecropping statutes as "communist". With the memory of the massacres of 1965-66—which took place largely in the villages—still only too vivid, few poor farmers dared to try to organize to defend their legal rights.²⁸

Foreign capital has had to pay a steep price for the privilege of entry and in "protection money" demanded by the generals. The pervasiveness and scale of looting in the post-1965 New Order have been unique even for the world of subfascism. In 1977, *Business Week* reported that the foreign business community was "dismayed by the blatant growth of corruption," citing the case of the general manager of Inco's nickel project, brought to court on a libel charge for dismissing an Indonesian company manager, and having the state judge offer to dismiss the case—for \$10,000. "Even Jakarta-based businessmen, who are accustomed to wholesale bribery, are disturbed that it took the World Bank's threat to hold back loan funds to squelch the payoff demand."²⁹

More widely publicized was General Telephone and Electronics' claim in 1977 that it had lost a telecommunications contract to Hughes Aircraft for refusing to pay a \$40 million bribe, Hughes allegedly having paid bribes of 20% or more to Indonesian officials.³⁰ Even more publicity was given an SEC complaint in 1977 against Pertamina, the state oil company of Indonesia, alleging a shakedown of 54 U.S., European and Japanese companies with Indonesian interests for money to finance the Rayamana Indonesian restaurant in New York City.³¹ An internal Exxon memo of February, 1970 says: "I doubt that we can avoid this shakedown...Do you have any suggestions as to amount?"³²

Licenses to do business, to import, to export, to exploit timber or mineral resources, government contracts, and state bank credit are all up for sale by the military elite, or else they are reserved for groups centered in a military officer or faction. The military clique dominates by controlling access to markets and credit, serving in a manner closely analogous to ordinary gangsters who control a line of business by force and demand payoffs for entry and "protection". In the Indonesian case, the gangsters run an entire country and insist on payment either via "commissions" or in joint ventures where the generals or their agents get 10-25% of the profits for a nominal investment.³³ Besides selling licenses and other privileges, the generals and their families or clients may form

their own sole agency companies, frequently using Chinese (*cukong*) managers. Thus a Suharto-associated company owns the Volkswagen agency, General Sutowo owns the Mitsubishi agency and so on down the line. The Suharto interests begin with the Cendana group, containing 15 companies in banking, real estate, cement, flour milling, rubber, logging, trading, and other activities. Suharto, his wife, brother, two brothers-in-law, and other relatives and clients have shareholdings in a wide variety of foreign companies, which regularly receive monopoly rights and subsidized bank credits.³⁴ The business empires of the generals are “nets of minority shareholdings in joint ventures in which their role is strictly political...”³⁵

The diversion of tax monies and foreign aid into privileged pockets has also attained spectacular levels under the New Order. A scandal of 1968 involved the misuse and looting of about 30% of several hundred million dollars of aid made available by foreign governments in that year.³⁶ Ingrid Palmer, in fact, estimates a 30% corruption drain in Indonesian aid programs in general.³⁷ An interesting feature of the constantly recurring scandals, and their sequel of promised cleanup, is that while the major looters are at the top, the top is immune from prosecution. “Explaining why all those brought to court were ‘small fish’, Sugih Arto [Attorney General, in charge of the anti-corruption drive] said, ‘for the time being the cases of the ‘big fish’ cannot be finalized because of technical difficulties.’ During 1968, 172 cases were investigated, but none involved members of the armed forces.”³⁸

Indonesian corruption is so vast that a new language has been required to cope with the “sticky handshake” in its many variants:

The faint crackle of money changing hands is as pervasive here as the scent of clove in the cigarette smoke. The lucre goes by many names: “smooth money,” “lubricating money,” “rule 2,000” (which means it will cost you 2,000 rupiahs—about \$5). Lately the government has been referring to extortion by low-level civil servants as “illegal levies.” “Illegal levies are everywhere, and almost everybody is involved,” declares Adm. Sudomo, head of a body known as the National Command for the Restoration of Security and Order.³⁹

In 1977 the generals began another campaign to totally exterminate corruption at every level—over a ten year-period. A proclamation to this effect was “greeted with great hilarity. There have been many like it, and they all have turned out to be so much hot air. This time, however, the government may have reasons for being serious. The level of public rapacity has grown here in recent years. The higher-ups are taking much more, it’s said, and they aren’t spreading it around.”⁴⁰

Perhaps more important than the “shakedown” forms of corruption just described have been the processes of strictly internal looting of Indonesia by its military elite. In 1957

when large Dutch holdings were taken over by the Indonesian state, the successor companies, although nominally nationalized, were given over to the control and management of the generals. These important enterprises were mismanaged and plundered on a grand scale, part of the looting being for the private profit of individual officers, some of it a conversion of resources to use by the army.⁴¹ Only Pertamina, the state oil company, escaped serious decline or ruin, for a time. Following the introduction of the New Order in 1965, these national enterprises went into relative decline, but they remained absolutely important in several areas such as oil, mining and trading. Internal corruption assumed the form of plain stealing on a new and larger scale, and the discriminatory manipulation of bank credit and the privileged exploitation of state monopolies.⁴² As noted by Anderson:

Most banks operated under military supervision and were compelled to offer huge credits and unrealistically low interest rates to senior officers (or *cukong* working with them). Very often these cheap credits were not used for productive investment, but for real-estate speculation, land grabbing, luxury housing, and so forth. Second was the survival of a number of important state monopolies, which in effect legally excluded indigenous entrepreneurs from certain economic fields. Particularly notorious instances of these were, and are, the state oil company Pertamina, and Bulog, the National Supply Board, which controls the import, marketing, and domestic purchase of basic staples. Not surprisingly, these lucrative monopolies were and are the fiefdoms of important military supporters of Suharto.⁴³

The reign of the denationalized and thieving generals has led to a great emphasis on infrastructure investments convenient to the export sector and “exotic” projects, frequently capital intensive and very expensive. The satellite-domestic communications network program, in connection with which the GTE-Hughes dispute arose, is one of the “exotics,” to which the state had already allocated \$840 million in 1978 “without noticeable effect” on communications even in Jakarta, and the *Times* notes that “many bankers and economists question whether the government and this impoverished nation where nearly half the people earn less than \$50 a year can really afford” such projects.⁴⁴ But the generals like good roads and modern communications, which demonstrate their modernity, serve the convenience of the small upper class who may wish to see Mohammad Ali on television, and facilitate the monitoring and military control of the population. Given their sensitivities to the needs of the masses, the choices are understandable.

The Indonesian generals, even more than the military in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, South Vietnam, and Thailand, have used power to catapult themselves to the top level of elite economic status. They live in “lavish American-style haciendas renting for \$1800 and more a month,” while hundreds sleep under the new bridges and overpasses of the expanding road networks, in this country with a per capita income still under \$200 per year.⁴⁵

Some of them have become fabulously wealthy. The Jakarta press reports Ibnu Sutomo's personal gifts of mosques and athletic stadiums and Robison claims it is common knowledge that "officials and their families are the owners of a large proportion of the luxury Jakarta housing leased to foreign executives...[and are] moving right into riceland ownership on a considerable scale, significantly changing the power structure in rural Indonesia."⁴⁶

With this institutionalized looting of huge proportions, plus a set of policies whereby the generals "guarantee the interests of their corporate [mainly foreign] partners,"⁴⁷ it is little wonder that the immense surge of oil revenues contributed little or nothing to rational economic development or succor for the underlying population. In fact, the state oil company, Pertamina, succeeded in running itself into bankruptcy by excessive borrowing, wild misinvestment, and what one Indonesian source referred to as "undoubtedly the worst plundering of the 20th century, maybe in the world."⁴⁸ Its excesses left Indonesia with an added debt burden of over \$6 billion and a sharply reduced international credit standing, which will be paid for by the general populace. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Pertamina investments "catered to foreign oil companies by building roads, bridges, houses and schools...[and on the side it was] channeling money primarily to the army for pet projects of various generals." According to the same source,

...government investigators have shied away from the most sensitive area of all: the whisper of a connection between Pertamina's dubious adventures and the family of President Suharto. There are countless rumors to be heard in Jakarta that Lt. Gen. Ibnu Sutowo, Pertamina's deposed president, poured Pertamina money into the private business operations of President Suharto's wife and brother.⁴⁹

All things considered, then, the developments of the past dozen years in Indonesia have been favorable to the predominant interests and priorities of the Free World in general, the United States and Japan in particular. Appropriately, therefore, Vice President Mondale stops in Indonesia for a friendly conference with that fellow devotee of freedom and human rights, Suharto, and is much encouraged by an announced release of political prisoners.⁵⁰ It almost goes without saying that the State Department will whitewash the continuing massive violation of human rights within Indonesia, and will continue its annual apologetics for the ongoing Indonesian aggression in East Timor. In each instance the State Department relies on statements by the Indonesian government which it accepts (or pretends to accept) at face value without verification. Once again, since our businessmen and military-intelligence establishment are reasonably happy,⁵¹ massive violations of human rights are entirely irrelevant.

It is also entirely understandable that the U.S. response to the 1965-66 holocaust proper

was restrained. No congressman denounced it on the floor of Congress, and no major U.S. relief organization offered aid.⁵² The World Bank, unaffected by either terror or the systematic looting of bank money,⁵³ subsequently made Indonesia its third largest borrower, with about \$2 billion in loans over the past decade.

Media treatment of the massacres was sparse, with the victims usually described merely as “Communists and sympathizers.” Little mention was made of the large numbers of women and children massacred or the modes and details of the slaughter. A characteristic rationalization was that “the people rose up in anger against the Communists” in a “political upheaval [that] had an air of irrationality about it, a touch of madness even...tinged not only with fanaticism but with blood-lust and something like witchcraft”; “nowhere but on these weird and lovely islands” could such an affair have “erupted.”⁵⁴ The rationalization is useful in suggesting (falsely) that this was a purely spontaneous popular upheaval, a peculiarly Asian form of “madness,” not a mass murder coordinated and stimulated from the top with direct participation by the military forces of the state, which acted with Nazi-like “ruthlessness,” demonstrating qualities that U.S. specialists had feared they might lack (see note 8). The U.S. liberals who sometimes offer such rationalizations would find them less appealing as an account of Czarist or Nazi pogroms against the Jews, which had a similar blend of popular hostility and top-level encouragement, planning and organization. We have cited media statements about the “positive” and “hopeful” nature of the changes in Indonesia (no details given). With a little time lapse George McArthur, well-known Far Eastern correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times*, has now produced a complete role reversal between assailants and victims. In discussing relations between Indonesia and China he states that

the Indonesians broke relations in 1965, when the Mao-inspired Communist Party, now outlawed, attempted to seize power and subjected the country to a bloodbath.⁵⁵

This bland statement that it was the victims of the massacre who “subjected the country to a bloodbath” is no slip of the pen, but rather a characteristic formulation. Elsewhere, the same noted correspondent refers to the “attempted Communist coup in 1965” as follows: “That attempt failed in a national bloodbath that ended the career of President Sukarno, who had tried to ride the Communist tiger.”⁵⁶ These examples exemplify the outer limits of subservience to the government propaganda system. The more typical pattern is to downplay the bloodbath and repression, which continues to this day.

For the leaders of the United States this bloodbath was a plus. In a Freedom House advertisement in the *New York Times* (30 November 1966), signed by “145 distinguished

Americans” including Jacob Javits, Dean Acheson, Thomas D. Cabot, Harry Gideonese, Lewis E. Powell, Whitelaw Reid, Lincoln Bloomfield, and Samuel Huntington, the events in Indonesia were treated as follows: “It [the Vietnam intervention by the United States] provided a shield for the sharp reversal of Indonesia’s shift toward Communism, which has removed the threats to Singapore and Malaysia.” And as we have already noted, in the statement on Asian policy sponsored by Freedom House and signed initially by 14 leading “moderate” political scientists and historians, later by many others, the series of events that included the huge Indonesian bloodbath were described merely as “dramatic changes” implicitly constructive in character, although these scholars, as noted earlier, condemn “violence” as a mode of achieving social change.⁵⁷ This humanistic treatment was paralleled by that of the late Prime Minister of Australia, Harold Holt, who told the River Club of New York City in July, 1966 that “with 500,000 to 1,000,000 Communist sympathizers knocked off, I think it is safe to assume a reorientation has taken place.”⁵⁸

Late in 1972 General Maxwell Taylor explained to *U.S. News and World Report* that “Indonesia’s independence today and its relative freedom from an internal Communist threat is attributable, to a large degree, to what we’ve accomplished in South Vietnam.” With large U.S. forces moving into Vietnam the Indonesian anti-Communists “were willing to run the risk of eliminating President Sukarno and destroying the Indonesian Communists.”⁵⁹ That’s all. It apparently does not even occur to this “military adviser to four presidents” that any moral issue might arise in “destroying the Indonesian Communists.” This was a constructive bloodbath. The victims, once identified as Communists, have lost all claim to humanity and merit whatever treatment they received. What is more, the victims may have been largely ethnic Chinese and landless peasants, and the “countercoup” in effect reestablished traditional authority more firmly.⁶⁰ Since the result was the preservation of a neo-colonial economic and social structure and an “open door” to U.S. investment, only sentimentalists will moralize over the bloodbath. The academic, business, political, and intellectual leaders of the United States must turn their attention to more serious matters.

4.2 Thailand: A Corrupt “Firm Base”

An important illustration of U.S. sponsorship and support for subfascist terror regimes of better than average viciousness and venality—and an equally consistent lack of sympathy with any democratic political tendencies—is provided by recent Thai history. Thailand emerged from World War II as the only state in Southeast Asia whose military leadership had collaborated with the Japanese to the extent of declaring war on the United States and

Great Britain. Immediately after the war U.S. officials refused to go along with the British desire to dismantle the apparatus of military power in Thailand. Thereafter the United States gradually increased its support of the military faction. As a result, after a few years of constitutional rule characterized by “temporizing” support of the democratic forces by the United States, the military was able to reestablish full control, and Phibun Songkhram became “the first pro-Axis dictator to regain power after the war...”⁶¹ Phibun quickly mastered the art of extracting both moral and material support from the U.S. cold warriors (“milking,” to use Joe Stilwell’s earthy reference to Chiang), constantly creating alarms of external and internal Red threats, and encouraging local newspapers “to denounce the United States so that his government could appeal for more U.S. aid on the grounds that it would help to pacify this ‘anti-American’ segment of public opinion”:⁶² and, of course, serving as a loyal agent of his North American supporters in SEATO and elsewhere.

In the apt language of the NLF’s description of the Diem regime and its successors, this was a “country-selling government.” In the Orwellian perceptions of Washington officialdom, however, this all reflected the free choice of the Thai people (“Thailand [sic] decided to adopt collective security as the basis for its foreign policy”).⁶³ Phibun used the diplomatic support, money, and arms provided by the U.S. leadership as his primary source of political power in Thailand, frequently timing his violence against his opponents to “coincide with an important meeting of the SEATO alliance, thereby minimizing local and foreign criticism.”⁶⁴ As the Thai police state consolidated itself and became both more bloody and more corrupt, U.S. support was in no way diminished and criticism by U.S. leaders, public and private, was minimal. In fact, “a notable trend throughout this period was the growing intimacy between the Thai military leaders and the top-level military officials from the United States.”⁶⁵ Legion of Merit awards were given to three Thai generals in 1954, and in 1955 Phibun himself was given a Doctorate of Laws at Columbia University and the Legion of Merit award by Eisenhower for his services in “the cause of freedom.” Vice President Nixon referred to Thailand’s “dedication to freedom,” while New York Governor Dewey was most impressed with the “settled, orderly situation...a steady improvement toward stability.”⁶⁶

When attention is called to the fact that Thailand under U.S. auspices has been a military dictatorship, the official response has been to point to “encouraging” political trends. If none could be dredged up at a particular moment, “Asian nature” and customs have been cited, along with the need to preserve Thailand’s “independence.”⁶⁷ At the time of Ambassador Leonard Unger’s appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee in 1969, a constitutional facade was in fleeting existence, and he was greatly encouraged by this development, which “rounds out a system in which the people of the country feel that they do have representation in Bangkok...”⁶⁸ But if their democracy is not quite like ours, the Thai people “have their own conviction about the better system of government, about how representation should be carried out...and I personally believe it would be a mistake for us to try to lecture them on the operation of democracy.”⁶⁹ Our lectures in fact have been accolades to the military dictators; and to fend off criticism at home, philosophical observations on Asian nature have been coupled with the plea that it would be arrogant of us to intrude into the internal affairs of “independent” states. In fact, however, U.S. impact and influence were continuous and decisive in helping the military faction to extinguish the constitutional regime of 1946-1947 and to consolidate military rule thereafter.

The large inflow of U.S. aid and arms, which totalled in excess of \$2 billion between 1949 and 1969, in the official (Unger) view, helped Thailand “to improve its internal security forces so that it will be better able to meet the guerrilla and terrorist threats which have been mounted by the Communists.”⁷⁰ In reality, throughout this period, until the U.S. invasion of Vietnam in 1965, the Communist “threat” in Thailand was slight, and the obvious and predictable use and effect of this aid was to establish a police state and suppress the substantial non-Communist opposition.

Another facet of the official mythology and propaganda regarding arms aid is that it “contributed to Thailand’s economic growth by enabling Thailand to devote a greater share of its resources to economic development.”⁷¹ Awkwardly, however, between 1954, the year of the SEATO treaty, and 1959, the value of Thai military expenditures rose by 250%. This was explained by Unger as a result of growth stimulated by military aid, which provided “an expanding income some of which could be devoted to security expenditures.”⁷² But Thai income per capita in 1959 was well below the levels of 1950-1952.⁷³ Control by an internally unconstrained military junta, dependent on the largesse of an external sponsor engaged in an anti-Communist crusade, is the key to this huge expansion of military outlays in a country with pressing development needs.

Rising security expenditures were part of the total package of aid-armaments-repression that was immensely advantageous to the Thai military elite and at the same time met the requirements of the selectively benevolent tutelage of the U.S. cold warriors. In this package the military leaders of this “land of the free” (Dulles) not only were able to rely on U.S. support to establish and control a police state, but also were able to convert

their political power into graft and monopoly income, including significant contributions by the U.S. taxpayer. From 1948 onward they “took over the directorships of banks, private companies, and government corporations, and they diverted large amounts of public funds to themselves.”⁷⁴ Each military leader developed a huge private income to finance his own political organization. Police Chief Phao (U.S. Legion of Merit, 1954) “derived most of his funds from the opium trade,” while army chief Sarit (U.S. Legion of Merit, 1954) got the proceeds of the national lottery.⁷⁵ At his death in 1963 Sarit left a fortune of approximately \$140 million, a matter disclosed only when relatives began squabbling over the booty.⁷⁶

As in Indonesia, much income of the military elite has been derived from dozens of state enterprises run by and for military officers. Also reminiscent of Indonesia is the sizable income flow produced by a generalized shakedown—i.e., “it was virtually impossible to run a major business or build a small one into a large one without enlisting the support of military men, which meant money and directorships.”⁷⁷ The Bangkok Bank during its period of boom growth had on its board four senior army generals and an army Field Marshal, and board members received substantial fees. A banker with close ties to the military said that the late General Kris Sivara, while on only a handful of boards, was paid handsomely by over 200 companies as “he was their protector.”⁷⁸

A substantial fraction of U.S. aid has almost certainly gone into the pockets of members of the military juntas, a fact sometimes revealed “in the extensive travel and luxuries they enjoyed after fleeing the country.”⁷⁹ Former CIA analyst Darling suggested that the military leadership of Thailand was able to siphon off for their personal use a staggering 12% of the national income.⁸⁰ The acceptability of this huge plundering to the U.S. leadership can be interpreted as recognition of the “Asian nature” of the elements who could best serve cold war ends (the same people, in this case, who could best serve the aims of the Japanese co-prosperity sphere during World War II), and the necessary costs to the U.S. taxpayer of purchasing the services of these “patriots”.

Bloodshed by the Thai military juntas in consolidating this police state has been substantial, but it has not noticeably disturbed their sponsors. Truman’s Ambassador Stanton was particularly energetic in urging even more vigorous repression, and “frequently encouraged Phibun to be alert to the allegedly increasing signs of Communist subversion among intellectuals, students, priests, and writers.”⁸¹ After the 1957 coup, according to Darling:

It was also discovered that the police chief [Phao, opium trader and recipient of the U.S. Legion of Merit] had

been much more ruthless in suppressing his political opponents than formerly assumed. Some of his atrocities rivaled those of the Nazis and the Communists. The graves of Nai Tiang Sirikhand and four unidentified persons were uncovered in Kanburi province, and further investigation revealed that these victims had been strangled to death while being interrogated by the police. Tiang had been a courageous leader in the Free Thai movement during World War II and later served in the National Assembly. Phao claimed that the former Free Thai leader had escaped from Thailand and joined the Communists.⁸² The deaths of other victims of the police were also investigated, but the extent of the torture and murder committed by the former police chief will probably never be fully known.⁸³

One of the “major assets” of the police chief was

the extensive assistance he received from the American-owned Sea Supply Corporation which enabled him to build the police force into a powerful military organization which was better led, better paid, and more efficient than the army...By 1954 American assistance enabled Phao to increase the police force to 42,835 men or one policeman for every 407 people. This was one of the highest ratios between policemen and citizens of any country in the world.⁸⁴

The Sea Supply Corporation was a CIA front and Phao was a CIA tool. The 1957 coup that ousted him from power was carried out by the army, which had been built up as a separate military force jostling for control by the Pentagon. U.S. penetration of Thailand was so extensive by the mid-1950s that the dominant factions—all military, and all extremely right-wing—were proxies for competing U.S. military and intelligence factions.⁸⁵ U.S. domination was so complete, and the denigration of civilian rule so thorough, that the U.S. construction of bases in Thailand was begun in the early 1960s without the knowledge of the Thai foreign minister or any other civilian leaders of that puppet state.⁸⁶ Militarization of Thailand went steadily forward after the 1957 coup, with heavy U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency and police programs. As noted by Thadeus Flood:

Not only did massive, purely military assistance intensify the militarization of Thailand during the Sarit regime, but the so-called “economic aid programs,” which to most Americans mean bettering peoples’ health and welfare, did the same. From FY 1967 through FY 1972, almost \$100 million in ‘economic aid’ went to civil police administration, an aspect of the counterinsurgency program, and the Accelerated Development Program, another counterinsurgency program.⁸⁷

All of this was *before* the U.S. counterinsurgency experts themselves claimed the existence of any armed insurgency in the Thailand countryside, which was in 1965.⁸⁸ This was a form of bribery, a *quid pro quo* to the Thai military police elite for turning over their country to the U.S. military. Lobe notes that

a number of U.S. officials saw no other explanation for the dramatic increase in aid levels when no objective emergency existed. No significant battles between the police and guerrillas occurred until mid-1965, and the training and new equipment that OPS had already so generously granted the Thai police had not been demonstrated deficient.⁸⁹

The Vietnam War made Thailand even more thoroughly an occupied satellite of the United States, with 50,000 U.S. military personnel using Thailand as a “landlocked aircraft carrier” in 1968 for bombing raids against the Indochinese peasant societies. Thai

mercenaries were also used extensively in Laos and Vietnam. The period of war boom and U.S. occupation brought with it inflation, an influx of foreign capital, a huge bar and prostitution industry—the corruption of Bangkok in this regard was notorious—and an artificial prosperity that temporarily covered over intensifying economic and social problems. The ending of the U.S. military build-up in 1968 began a period of serious political as well as socioeconomic difficulties, including a need to come to terms with the prospective U.S. withdrawal from Indochina. A short interval of democratization in 1969-1970 was succeeded by another military coup (November, 1971), after which a further period of economic difficulties and a growing tide of unrest culminated in the October, 1973 uprising. The largest demonstration in Thai history took place in Bangkok on October 13 (some 250,000 people), and a temporary retreat from power of the disorganized military-police establishment followed.^{[90](#)}

The period between October, 1973 and October, 1976, when the generals reassumed control, was an extremely delicate one, with many forces contending for power. The U.S. role during these years, and in the bloody outcome, deserves close examination. When the military was ousted from power in 1973, there existed a situation in some ways even less propitious for the success of democracy than that in Chile following the election of Allende. As with the Chilean case, there existed a very precarious balance of power between the political leadership nominally in control and the economic and military infrastructure which had at their disposal very effective means of vetoing government actions. And while in Chile there was some separation between the power structures of the economy and the military, in Thailand, the two were nearly identical.

But, if the conditions favoring democratic development were less than auspicious, the attempted changes were also less dramatic than in Chile. The government at no time attempted anything approaching a socialist program. Indeed, up until October, 1974, the country was ruled under the interim constitution of 1972, which was written by the generals, and the first free elections (which still excluded the Communists) were not held until the end of January, 1975.^{[91](#)}

As might be expected, the economic situation under the new government was also anything but favorable. In a sense, the chickens of the war-based prosperity of the previous decade had come home to roost, to the disadvantage of the democratic government. The oil crisis and rise in energy prices also took their toll during the brief democratic interlude. The economic difficulties were exacerbated by a releasing of the pent-up grievances of the now legalized labor movement, whose strikes also

inconvenienced and upset the middle class. Democracy brought with it a surge of cultural and intellectual ferment, in which personal behavior and open criticism of formerly sacrosanct cultural objects confused and disturbed many middle class citizens.⁹² The business-controlled mass media made the most of strikes and cultural aberrations to stir up patriotic ardor and a longing for the simplicity of a bygone age. Thus economic and cultural factors helped reduce the base of democratic support among the population.

Significantly, during the democratic years two ultra-right wing movements appeared on the scene which were to prove important in the downfall of the civilian government. These were the Nawaphon movement and the Red Gaurs, both led by men closely linked to the U.S. military-intelligence establishment. General Wallop Rojanawisut, one of the founders of both the Nawaphon movement and the Red Gaurs, was trained in psychological warfare in the United States and headed Thai military intelligence. The guiding force behind the Red Gaurs, Colonel Sudsai Hatsadinthon, was an officer in the CSOC (Communist Suppression Operations Command, later the Internal Security Operations Command [ISOC]), the chief counterinsurgency structure of the Thai military. He worked with the CIA in organizing Meo tribesmen from Laos into a counterrevolutionary force and he recruited into the Red Gaurs veterans of Thai forces that had fought in Vietnam. Both Nawaphon and the Red Gaurs were terrorist organizations using assassinations, beatings, threats of force, and disruptive tactics to break strikes, disperse demonstrations, destroy or intimidate any opposition media, bombing presses and killing or threatening publishers, journalists and newsdealers. They were remarkably successful, with a large part of the progressive media in Thailand stifled, while right wing papers and journals were untouched. All of this was done, along with other acts of violence, with police connivance or protection.⁹³

Thus a new and open violence grew during this period, associated in large measure with the activities of these organized terrorist groups, and profoundly affecting the political process. In contrast with the peaceful elections of January, 1975, in which the left did rather well, the election of April, 1976 was violent and brutal, and the legal left was virtually eliminated—more than 40 people were killed, almost all of them students and leftists, including the secretary-general of the Socialist Party, and there were numerous fire bombings and other acts of terror. During the 1976 elections Nawaphon contributed financially to a number of rightist candidates, and backed the extreme-right party Thammathipatai, which did very poorly in the election. It was widely believed in Thailand that foreign, and mainly U.S. money flowed to some of these right wing groups and

parties.⁹⁴ Despite the crushing electoral defeat of the ultra-right, however, its sponsors were about to resume uncontested control of the state.

The military establishment had a great deal to lose from the consolidation in power of a genuinely democratic order—it had become a huge corruption machine, operating and looting government enterprises, engaged in the massive shakedown system described above, and controlling the flow of U.S. military and economic aid, while siphoning a good part of it into its own pockets. U.S. and Japanese business did not like the prospects of democracy in Thailand either, with unions and strikes once more in evidence, and threats to such appurtenances of subfascism as favorable minerals concessions and low tax rates. And the U.S. military-intelligence establishment of course, faced a loss of access.

The battle lines become even clearer when it is recalled that these events occurred during a period of rapid deterioration in the U.S. position in Indochina. Thailand, having served as a strategic base for the U.S. military during the war, was still prized by the U.S. military for the Utapao naval base and the Ramesuan complex, the largest and most sophisticated U.S. electronic-intelligence installation outside of the U.S. and West Germany. Because the student-led democratic movement was calling for an elimination of the U.S. military presence in Thailand, it presented a direct obstacle to U.S. aims in the area, threatening the corrupt but “firm base” that the U.S. had enjoyed, compliments of the generals.

The government during the period of civilian rule, while itself somewhat paralyzed in its efforts at reform, was also doing things which made the fight against Communist guerrillas in the outlying provinces more difficult to pursue in the manner to which the army and police were accustomed. In March of 1975, the Interior Ministry revealed that its investigation of the Communist Suppression Operations Command turned up a pattern of indiscriminate killing of suspects and in particular the summary execution of at least 70 people during 1970-1971 in Patthalung Province. These executions would not have been any more cause for notice than others previously, but for the fact that they seemed to mark a new style of killing in which the victims were first clubbed unconscious and then incinerated in oil drums to eliminate the evidence.⁹⁵

In October, 1976, all the various forces acting to destabilize Thai democracy came to a head. The rightist elements, in an alliance with a fearful monarchy, were on the offensive with wild verbal attacks and increasingly numerous physical outrages.⁹⁶ The students were sitting-in at Thammasat University to protest the return to Thailand of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, former Prime Minister and dictator during the period of the largest

U.S. military presence in Thailand. The border police (created by the CIA in 1951 and still closely linked with the CIA in fighting the guerrilla insurgents) and the Red Gaurs attacked the students, who were virtually unarmed. Sharpshooters, automatic weapons, and even an eight foot recoilless rifle were used in dislodging the students, rather than the usual and less violent tear gas and clubs. Forty or more students were killed and some were burned alive by the Red Gaurs. This fighting completely disabled the already fragmented student movement and the military coup which took place on October 6th was quite predictable.

The U.S. role in the 1976 overthrow of Thai democracy and the return to subfascist rule was clear and familiar in pattern. The establishment of a democratic government in late 1973 and early 1974 led to a sharp increase in military aid and a reduction in the modest economic aid, despite the troubled economic condition of Thailand. Just as in the case of Chile before the military coup, the intent was clearly hostile to the new democratic forces and supportive of the anti-democratic military-police establishment. In the years after 1973 the United States sent \$150 million in military aid to Thailand, while economic aid fell from \$39 million to \$17 million in 1975. U.S. sales of military equipment in fiscal 1976 totaled \$89.6 million, more than Thailand had purchased in the previous 25 years combined.⁹⁷

It was indicated earlier that the neo-fascist terrorist organizations that played such an important role in disrupting the short-lived democratic system, the Red Gaurs and Nawaphon, were intimately connected with U.S. military-intelligence operations. Both organizations emerged out of the Communist Suppression Operations Command, the major anti-Communist, counterinsurgency organization set up and funded by the United States in 1965. The leaders of both terrorist organizations were affiliated with CSOC and had close earlier links with U.S. officials. CIA financing and organizational support to these terrorist organizations is widely alleged.⁹⁸ The CIA presence in Thailand had been substantial, with 100 operatives reported there in 1974. But as Flood has noted:

Yet, to understand the October 6 rightwing military *coup*, and the subsequent repression, book burning, and the like, it is not necessary to posit the overt presence of CIA officers directly manipulating events in Bangkok with walkie-talkies. It is only necessary to look at the cumulative effects of almost a quarter century of careful cultivation by the U.S. of an essentially fascist-minded, repressive, reactionary, privileged military elite, faced with a majority of farmers and laborers who have been deprived of the dignity of political, social or economic recognition. Given the “polarization” inherent in the situation, and the promotion by United States strategies of the rightwing military and police, a move by rightwing military to...displace civilian government was inevitable, with or without CIA direct manipulation.⁹⁹

Flood’s final assessment is worth quoting at some length:

In the longer perspective, the entire Thai military and police structure is the creation of the United States. More

specifically in reference to the recent bloody coup, the American-sponsored, -funded, -trained and -advised Internal Security Command—formerly the Communist Suppression Operations Command—has been the very embodiment of the American solution to the social problems of Asia: the counterinsurgency technique. Begun by a handful of CIA officers in the 1950s, pursued with thousands of Americans in a maze of the U.S. Defense Department agencies in Thailand in the '60s and early '70s, the counterinsurgency technique has revealed itself again in Thailand—as in South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the countries of Indochina until the end of the war, a technique to counter indigenous democracy, civilian sovereignty, human rights and social justice.

The old altruistic illusions that the early technicians of counterinsurgency carried with them to Thailand have long since been stripped away. The ugly reality is that the intensive application of counterinsurgency techniques has produced in Thailand a political system markedly reminiscent of the civilian-military fascism of the '30s and '40s. It is to the shame of the United States that this system is a direct progeny of a quarter-century of American intervention, especially via the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense, in the destinies of the people of Thailand.¹⁰⁰

In the 1973-1976 period of a weak democratic rule, terminated by a military coup, one searches in vain even for *verbal* support by the United States for the new democracy, for warnings to the powerful fascistic forces to restrain themselves, or for threats of any cut-off of aid or of other kinds of intervention in the event of an anti-democratic turnover. A pointless search, because the “land of the free,” despite the Orwellian impression to the contrary, was the main sponsor of Thai subfascism after World War II and continued that pattern from 1973 up to the present. The benefits to the U.S. leadership from support of this series of bloody and corrupt tyrannies have been simple and decisive. For U.S. money and help in preserving their power and filling their pockets, this military clique has been willing to subordinate its foreign policy to that of the United States, serve as agent and errand boy, maintain an “open door” to U.S. economic interests, and allow the use of Thailand as a base for U.S. counterrevolutionary intervention in Southeast Asia.¹⁰¹ Immediately following the Geneva Accords of 1954 the National Security Council laid out a plan for subversion throughout Southeast Asia, with Thailand “as the focal point of U.S. covert and psychological operations,” including “covert operations on a large and effective scale” throughout Indochina, with the explicit intention of “making more difficult the control by the Viet Minh of North Vietnam.”¹⁰² Subsequently, it became the landlocked aircraft carrier for the U.S. wars in Vietnam and Laos, as well as a source of mercenaries, as already noted. The toleration level of U.S. leaders for graft, torture, and bloodbaths by “patriotic leaders” willing to defend their independence against Communist aggression by serving as a “firm base” for their sponsor’s activities, is boundless.

The mass media have played their usual role in support of subfascism by the familiar devices: minimal coverage of the details of official Thai corruption and violence;¹⁰³ transmission of Thai-U.S. official views of problems and issues as the almost exclusive form of “information”;¹⁰⁴ and a simple refusal to probe beneath the surface of

personalities and political shifts to expose the crucial U.S. role in creating, building, and shaping Thai militarism. A benevolent king, a great many generals, unruly students, an unstable political scene, some typically Asian corruption, a beautiful countryside, a traditionally friendly relationship between the United States and a Thailand whose freedom and independence the U.S. has been generously trying to protect—this is the pattern of images conveyed to the public by the U.S. media, and it is a masterpiece of deceptive propaganda.

4.3 Repacification in the Philippines

There is no better illustration of the promise that U.S. policy holds for Southeast Asia and the Third World in general than the case of the Philippines, the only official U.S. colony in Asia for half a century, and now still very much in the U.S. sphere of influence, one more militarized, repressive, and venal totalitarian free enterprise system, with the “haves” resorting once again to open violence to protect their interests against challenges from the “have-nots”. After a brief interlude of post-World War II quasi-independence and CIA-manipulated democracy, the democratic facade was suspended under Marcos in 1972—without significant negative response from the United States¹⁰⁵—and the standard client fascist model was put into place and given undeviating support by the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations.

Filipino nationalists had declared their independence from Spain in 1898, only to be faced with an extended U.S. war of counterinsurgency, complete with massacres of civilians, burnings of villages, torture, and the other appurtenances of pacification. In those less cynical days U.S. commanders openly admitted their intention to turn resisting areas into a “howling wilderness.”¹⁰⁶ The problem faced by the U.S. conquerors was well expressed by General J. Franklin Bell, who explained that “practically the entire population has been hostile to us at heart.” Thus it was necessary to terrorize them into submission, keeping them “in such a state of anxiety and apprehension that living under such conditions will soon become unbearable” and their “burning desire for the war to cease” will ultimately “impel them to devote themselves in earnest to bringing about a real state of peace...[and]...to join hands with the Americans.”¹⁰⁷ Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were pacified permanently in this early exercise in winning hearts and minds.

Filipino nationalists, incidentally, knew very well what was to come when they attempted to defend their newly-won independence from U.S. forces dispatched—on direct orders from the Almighty Himself, as President McKinley explained—to secure this

outpost for freedom in Asia. One wrote that the Filipinos

have already accepted the arbitrament of war, and war is the worst condition conceivable, especially when waged by an Anglo-Saxon race which despises its opponent as an alien or inferior people. Yet the Filipinos accepted it with a full knowledge of its horror and of the sacrifices in life and property which they knew they would be called upon to make.^{[108](#)}

The period of explicit colonial rule, lasting from 1898 to 1946 (with a brief World War II interregnum of Japanese occupation), was characterized by economic and political domination by U.S. administrators and a local and U.S.-based economic elite. The local elite was made up largely of major landholders whose interests were cemented to those of the United States by the privileged U.S. market position of Philippine sugar, though there was also a business class, partly independent but much of it servicing predominant U.S. economic interests. After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the Philippines were granted technical independence under the rule of a conservative oligarchy closely linked to the United States, with the pre-war colonial economy restored. The pre-1972 (pre-martial law) economy of the Philippines was one of extremely concentrated economic and political power, with a powerful landlord and business class (the famous “400” families) and enormous U.S. influence based on a nearly \$2 billion investment and a network of business, financial and military linkages.^{[109](#)}

The first president of the newly “independent” country was Japanese collaborator Manuel Roxas, reinstated by General MacArthur under the pretext that he had been a double agent. The Philippine Communist Party (PKP), which had been in the forefront of the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle, attempted “to enter the Philippine political arena legally through a front political party, the Democratic Alliance (DA),” but “failed, as DA-elected members of the Philippine Congress were denied their seats...”^{[110](#)} The insurgency that followed was suppressed with extensive U.S. aid. This peasant rebellion had its roots in grievances and injustices that had become increasingly severe under U.S. colonial rule, and was a direct consequence of the violence and lawlessness of the elites linked to the U.S. colonial system and the brutal postwar repression of the anti-Japanese resistance forces by the United States, which lent its support to the Japanese collaborators among the landowning classes and devoted itself to destruction of the anti-Japanese resistance, very much as in Thailand, and for essentially the same reasons. Peasants turned to rebellion (stigmatized as “Communist terror”) when very moderate demands were met with mounting force and violence by the United States and its local allies drawn from the wealthy elites.^{[111](#)} As Jonathan Fast observed, “the Philippine counterinsurgency effort of the early 1950s served as a laboratory for later American involvement in Vietnam,” where General Lansdale “tried to repeat his Philippine success with Ngo Dinh Diem.”^{[112](#)}

From 1946 to 1972 the economy of the Philippines expanded rapidly within its neo-colonial and dependency framework. The salient features of this “success” are described by van der Kroef: “declining real wage rates,¹¹³ persistent extreme disparities in income levels, the seemingly unchecked power of private U.S. capital (especially in the context of the operations of a few Filipino family corporations)”; and “graft and corruption prevalent everywhere, but particularly in government, whose machinery of justice was felt to benefit only the rich.”¹¹⁴ The democratic facade of the Philippines was extremely brittle in this society dominated by external interests and a tiny and very wealthy elite, including the U.S. favorite Ferdinand Marcos.

A domestic crisis sharpened in the early 1970s, based fundamentally on the injustices of this exploitative elite-dominated society, but precipitated by a rising tide of nationalism, fueled both by hostility to the Vietnam War and by resentment at continued U.S. economic domination and further penetration. The ruling of the Supreme Court of the Philippines in 1972 that the United States could no longer maintain its privileged position in land ownership, and that U.S. citizens and corporations were subject to the general ban on foreign ownership of Philippine land, brought the situation to a head. Marcos declared martial law in September 1972, and followed this with widespread arrests of opposition figures and intellectuals, tight control of the press,¹¹⁵ and “new constitutional proposals considerably more favorable to American business interests than leftist and more radical nationalist sentiment in the [Constitutional] Convention would have wanted.”¹¹⁶ Marcos “seemed eager to stay on the right side of the U.S. capital...He also seemed intent on expanding opportunities for the domestic Philippine business of a few powerful families whose links with foreign interests, and preponderant power in so many aspects of Philippine political life have long been viewed, particularly in PKP and NPA [New People’s Army] circles, as major obstacles to all significant reforms”¹¹⁷—and rightly so.

When Marcos declared martial law in 1972 he announced a number of aims: reestablishing civil order, a crackdown on corruption, an intention to carry out major social reforms, and—more muted and passed along more quietly to foreign governments and business interests—an intent to improve the investment climate for business. Only the conservative and business-oriented objectives have been seriously pursued. Although Marcos spoke of leading a “revolution of the poor,” this was cynical demagoguery—he has led a counterrevolution of a rich and expatriate elite. It was noted earlier that since 1972 corruption has not diminished in the least, but rather has shifted in composition of the looter class toward Marcos’s family and friends.¹¹⁸ His land reform has been

insignificant, enabling perhaps 40,000 out of several million tenant families *to begin making payments* for land purchases from their landlords.¹¹⁹ Wages have been controlled by martial law abridgments of labor rights to organize and strike,¹²⁰ and the operation of “natural forces” under totalitarian free enterprise conditions has exercised a further (and familiar) depressing influence on wages—in particular, the conversion of agricultural land to export and agribusiness has accelerated the displacement of rural labor and its flow into shanty-town suburbs. Since Marcos assumed the presidency in 1965 the real wages of blue collar and rural agricultural workers have fallen by one-third and middle class groups such as civil servants have also suffered major declines in real income.¹²¹

Social resources have gone heavily into beautifying Manila while the countryside, where over 85% of the population live, “has been committed to slumber in the 19th century,” Wideman reports.¹²² He adds that to impress foreign visitors the martial law government invested \$608 million in 14 hotels and a convention center in Manila—all of them money losers—while over a quarter of the Manila population live in shanties and life in the rural areas is usually even more bleak. The allocation of resources between the military establishment and urgent social needs such as medical facilities has also been typically subfascist; there has been a huge military build-up since 1972, the armed forces quadrupling in size to 225,000 and military outlays also increasing by more than five fold (from \$129 million in fiscal 1973 to \$676 million in fiscal 1977). While military-police expenditures soar, in Eastern Visayas 85% of the population cannot afford to enter a hospital. According to public health officials, 37% of all doctors and 46% of all Philippine nurses work in Manila. Wideman reports further that although pneumonia and tuberculosis are the two major killers in the Philippines, there are no programs for their eradication. And despite the scarcity of health care in the rural areas, “Imelda Marcos, who was appointed Metro Manila governor by her husband the president, spent \$50 million on a palatial Manila heart sanatorium (which is largely unused).”

The human rights-U.S. aid pattern is also familiar. Over 60,000 persons had been arrested under martial law by 1977, with the numbers detained at any one time necessarily obscure but running into the thousands. As late as December, 1975, Marcos asserted that “no one, but no one, has been tortured.” But in fact torture has been “widespread and systematic” according to Amnesty International, and 88 individual torturers were identified by name by AI in 1976. The forms employed are the ones that have now been standardized throughout the empire, fantastically cruel and sadistic, and highly reminiscent of those we associate with Nazism:

prolonged beatings with fists, kicks and karate blows, beatings with a variety of contusive instruments—including rifle butts, heavy wooden clubs and family-sized soft drink bottles, the pounding of heads against walls or furniture (such as the edge of a filing cabinet), the burning of genitals and pubic hair with the flame of a cigarette lighter, *falanga* (beating on the soles of the feet) and the so-called “lying-on-air” torture, in which an individual is made to lie with his feet on one bed, his head on a second bed, with his body “lying-on-air” in between; the individual is then beaten or kicked whenever he lets his body fall or sag.

A particularly insidious pattern of interrogation/torture which emerges from the interviews is the use of “safe houses” as they are called—they are in fact torture centers which are used by the National Intelligence Service Agency or NISA. The following description...will give some idea of what has happened to martial law detainees taken to “safe houses.”

“He was beaten with a wooden club with four flat surfaces and an inscription on it. The torturers concentrated on his thighs, lower legs and buttocks, but also struck his head, face, chest, stomach and back with the club. He vomited often during and after the beatings. His entire body grew swollen and areas of skin were stripped from his thighs. The scars continued to be painful when touched.

“The AI delegates found there were still two deep scars on his legs, a year and a half later, which were not completely healed. There were three scars on his legs from cigarette burns.”

It should be noted that NISA is an intelligence agency answerable only to President Marcos and under the command of the President’s personal head of security, General Fabian Ver.

There are other disturbing patterns of torture which emerge from the interviews. For example, a large number of detainees who were interrogated by the Metropolitan Command of the Philippines Constabulary...were subjected to torture by electro-shock...Two sisters in their early twenties, who were recently released without having been charged or tried after two years of detention, told us that they were subjected to approximately 45 minutes of electro-shock each, one sister being forced to watch the other. They described the ordeal as follows:

“You can’t help screaming—it makes you writhe all over...

“We had hallucinations afterwards—we each lost five pounds from the torture sessions. We couldn’t walk straight. We had burns on our hands. They didn’t allow us to sleep for almost two nights running. We were threatened with rape from the very beginning.”^{[123](#)}

Mrs. Trinidad Herrera, a well-known community leader of Tondo, a huge squatter suburb of Manila, who has fought for the interests of the poor in opposition to “beautification” projects of Mrs. Marcos, which would have demolished several urban poor communities, was arrested by the regime and subjected to beatings and extensive electric shock tortures including applications to extremities and nipples in a “safe house.” Upon release she was in a state of shock and unable to speak for five days. She was released in part because of a strenuous protest by the U.S. Department of State, which was responding to indignant outcries both within the Philippines and abroad. Which all goes to show that in a system of sponsored torture, the sponsor can occasionally demonstrate its essential humanity by such acts of grace.

The Herrera controversy was so intense that her torturers were actually brought to trial—and acquitted.^{[124](#)} And their work continues unhindered except for momentary pauses on two occasions: (1) when aid to Marcos is under consideration by the U.S. Congress, and (2) when U.S. dignitaries such as Vice-President Mondale stop to visit on their journeys through the subfascist provinces.^{[125](#)} For these occasions Marcos has mastered the art of

making the verbal and tokenistic gestures necessary to placate an indulgent parent, a parent easily reassured on such secondary issues as a total suppression of democratic rights and systematic torture. He may announce a release of political prisoners (although none were admitted to exist previously), or he may proclaim and possibly even hold “demonstration elections,”¹²⁶ or he may issue bravados on “interference” and the need to renegotiate the terms of the agreement on U.S. bases in the Philippines. Marcos has little to worry about, however, as he knows from long experience. If he were to do something *serious*, such as expropriating U.S.-owned pineapple plantations, we would witness a less complacent U.S. response, less defensiveness with regard to Marcos, a reduced willingness to be taken in by gestures, and a deeper regard for human rights, not to speak of more forceful measures.

The Marcos regime has been sufficiently disturbed by international publicity and congressional reaction to its political prisoners and use of torture that it has moved to a more advanced subfascist process, namely, the use of unexplained “disappearances” and the police burial of dissidents allegedly killed in “fire fights” with the police and army.¹²⁷ By these improvements dissidents are killed and evidence of their torture is eliminated. Thus by the simple deployment of repression techniques used in other parts of the empire, dissidents can be dealt with more efficiently and the State Department can assert that torture “is on the decline.”¹²⁸

On the essentials—that is, creating a hospitable investment climate and, in the Philippines case, allowing U.S. occupation of major military base sites—Marcos has been entirely satisfactory, which is the main reason why his human rights violations will never be compellingly important and why U.S. leaders will always be impressed with “improvements” and Marcos’ assurances that a better day lies immediately ahead. We saw earlier that Marcos quickly suspended the Supreme Court ruling against U.S. land ownership, and accommodated immediately to the primary condition for subfascist rule: namely, solidifying the external constituency by assuring U.S. business interests that their bidding will be done. *Business Week* noted that Marcos “has made it abundantly clear that he wants to help American business as much as domestic politics will allow.”¹²⁹ All Marcos asks is a percentage of the take, which is standard practice in the empire; and as with the suspension of democracy and systematic torture this has been quite acceptable.

In fact, as we discussed earlier, repression and torture have been integral to the economic policies of subfascism as instruments for achieving passivity, “order,” and “stability”. In nationalistic Third World states, allowing multinationals to dominate the

economy, to buy out or destroy domestic enterprises, to dispossess large numbers of peasants in a rapid development of export-oriented agriculture, and to implement the deflationary unemployment-generating policies required by the international banking fraternity—all these are not easily achieved within a democratic order. The collective conspiracy of a comprador-business elite, local military officers, and foreign economic and military interests normally cannot maintain “stability” without active or threatened terror. An officer of Manufacturers Hanover Trust bank, speaking of the Philippines, noted in 1976 that “in recent years, major social and political reforms [sic] have reduced the bottlenecks that hampered past efforts to achieve faster economic growth.”¹³⁰ Since the only social and political reforms in recent years have been the implementation of the Marcos dictatorship and martial law regime, we have here an explicit translation of multinational business values into the concept of “reform” and desirable social and political structures for the Third World. It may throw some light on why the “human rights” crusade remains a dead letter within the U.S. sphere of influence.

In the case of the Philippines the two huge U.S. military installations at Subic Bay and Clark Air Force Base are also a factor influencing U.S. official reactions to human rights violations. The Pentagon wants these bases, and President Carter has been too weak to suffer the loss of face involved in abandoning them—although they have lost most of their value even for a “forward strategy,”¹³¹ and Marcos uses them as an instrument of blackmail and to tie the United States more closely to his totalitarian regime. By holding up the United States for even greater ransom for their use, Marcos extracts more loot from the U.S. taxpayer (about \$200 million a year) but also very cleverly conveys the impression of “independence” and of his willingness to stand up to his indulgent parent!

Marcos has provided the requisite terror and “stability” in the Philippines and, accordingly, he has been generously supported by the United States and its affiliated lending agencies. As human rights violations became truly massive under martial law, military aid from the U.S. doubled.¹³² U.S. business, banks, and the IMF and World Bank have been greatly encouraged by Marcos’ new order, and capital has poured in—foreign investment more than doubled on an annual average basis after 1972, and the external debt of the Philippines rose from \$2.2 billion to \$6 billion in 1977. The Philippines has become one of the largest borrowers from the international lending organizations, its loans having grown from \$182.5 million in 1972 to \$1.5 billion in 1976. The sharp increase in U.S. military and non-military aid is thus once more correlated with a major rise in violations of human rights, degradation of the economic and social condition of the majority of the

population, *and* an improved investment climate.

The dominant elites of subfascism are fortunate also that the U.S. provides the best that money can buy in repression expertise and technology to help them keep their populations under control. Even before the constitutional convention was aborted by the Marcos coup of 1972, charges had been made that U.S.-AID and the CIA were training Philippine police under the public safety program “for eventual para-military and counterinsurgency operations as part of a global programme designed to militarize and ‘mercenarize’ the police forces of client states.”¹³³ Between 1948 and 1968 more than \$1.7 billion had been provided in U.S. economic and military grants and loans under the U.S. military assistance program, including more than \$400 million in hardware.¹³⁴ Under the rubric of “technical assistance,” U.S.-AID financed the Office of Public Safety (OPS), which was extensively involved “in reorganizing, funding, and training the Philippine police apparatus both in the Philippines and the U.S. from 1965 to September 21, 1972, the day martial law was declared.”¹³⁵ In December, 1966, Frank Walton, fresh from service in Saigon, where “he oversaw the growth and large-scale reorganization of the South Vietnamese police force—all part of the overall CIA plan to dissolve the political infrastructure of the NLF”¹³⁶—was installed as “Team Chief” for AID/OPS. He was assisted by a variety of U.S. officials with experience in Brazil, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and elsewhere, as well as by Philippine intelligence officers who had been trained by the CIA during the U.S.-backed suppression of the Huk insurgency “and had become resident experts on counter-intelligence operations in and around Saigon.”¹³⁷ Walton’s group submitted a report to USAID in February, 1967 which “served as the impetus for a drastic reorganization of the Philippine police apparatus and for a much enlarged and more involved U.S. Public Safety Division.”¹³⁸ For fiscal year 1972-1973, the expanded Public Safety program was budgeted by the U.S. government at \$3.9 million, a marked increase. Police are trained in the United States at CIA, FBI, army, and local police training centers, and in the Philippines at training academies which “were easily converted into detention camps to hold the large numbers of political prisoners” after martial law was declared.¹³⁹

With increased U.S. involvement in internal security problems, the new program was patterned on the CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) program—the pacification program—in Vietnam. The new Philippines project was initially staffed by former CORDS officials from Vietnam headed by Thomas Rose, who was AID public administration chief in Saigon, and Richard Kriegel, former CORDS provincial adviser in Bindinh province. U.S. military units have been “involved in ‘civic’

operations in conjunction with the Filipino army that clearly had a relevance to internal security problems.”¹⁴⁰ On July 12, 1973, William Sullivan was confirmed by the Senate for the post of Ambassador to the Philippines. Sullivan had been U.S. Ambassador in Laos from 1964 to 1969, where as Anthony Lewis remarks, he “played a decisive part in what must qualify as the most appalling episode of lawless cruelty in American history, the bombing of Laos”¹⁴¹ —an episode which, incidentally, was initially suppressed by the *New York Times* editors.¹⁴² Sullivan has had a major role in organizing and coordinating U.S. subversive and military activities in Southeast Asia, and although his contributions to the people of Laos pale before those of murderous successor, G. McMurtrie Godley, who implemented the Nixon-Kissinger program, they nevertheless achieved considerable scale.¹⁴³ It is altogether appropriate that Sullivan should have been shifted to the Philippines just as Lansdale moved from the Philippines to Vietnam twenty years earlier, as part of the continuing effort to assist the people of Southeast Asia to remain in the Free World. The logical next step was to dispatch Sullivan to Iran, where he could convey Carter’s messages of support to the Shah as his U.S.-armed troops machine-gunned demonstrators in the streets, another application of the famed “human rights” policy.

The resistance to Marcos’s police state has grown slowly but persistently under the pressure of systematic abuse of the majority of the population, and there is good reason to suppose that U.S.-supplied weapons, counterinsurgency training and possibly even direct intervention will be needed sometime in the future to shore up a system that violates every principle of humanity. The Muslim Bangso Moro Army, which began large-scale fighting against the regular army in 1972, has been the most pressing internal threat to Marcos’s rule. Its 20,000 person army is still resisting effectively after years of bloody encounters (over 5,000 government casualties, 60,000 civilians killed, a million refugees from Marcos’s search-and-destroy). This struggle was based on a gradual accumulation of grievances by the Muslim population of the island of Mindanao, especially the continuous territorial encroachment by settlers, loggers, and agribusiness corporations, aided by Philippine Army pacification operations. A revolt was brewing on Mindanao in the 1960s, and it turned into a national rebellion in the early 1970s. Throughout the entire Philippines there is a growing National Democratic Front (NDF), begun in 1973 as a loosely organized coalition of many struggling resistance groups, covering many classes, organizations and strategies, united by a desire to end the “U.S.-Marcos dictatorship.”¹⁴⁴ It includes the New Peoples Army (NPA), small but active on many islands, educating and encouraging passive and active guerrilla resistance and warfare in the countryside. The NPA is working a fertile field, since a substantial majority of the population is both rural

and severely abused by Marcos's policies. The NDF also includes many members of the urban working class and sub-proletariat, banned from organizing and striking under Marcos regulations, but increasingly organizing and striking outside the law.¹⁴⁵ Large numbers of students, other members of the intelligentsia, and a great many religious workers are also properly included within the NDF. Marcos-U.S. force and threats of force have so far done their job in limiting the effectiveness of the NDF and in keeping the vast majority passive, but the latent hostility to the dictatorship bursts into the open when a little crevice of opportunity arises¹⁴⁶—and suggests that the present regime may be sitting on a powder keg. All of this is reminiscent of the earlier peasant rebellion of 1946-1956.

There are still those who see U.S. actions in Vietnam as an aberration, a deviation from the disinterested concern and noble efforts that animate U.S. policy in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. This view of essential benevolence, in fact, has dominated scholarship, journalism, and school texts, with the aberration concept a necessary complement, providing an explanation for any ongoing exception. For many years the Philippines have stood as a neglected monument contradicting this conception of the fundamentals of U.S. foreign policy, from the brutal exercise in pacification at the turn of the century to the early post-World War II repression. As the groundwork is being laid in neocolonial economic and social conditions, aided by U.S.-financed and sponsored pacification techniques and policies, no one should be surprised if a renewed constructive bloodbath begins to unfold in that country. This is a system of injustice that daily sows the seeds of its own destruction. It may meet banker standards of worth, but it fails to meet any human criterion—as evidenced by its open reliance on violence and the denial of human rights to the vast bulk of the population. As in many parts of the empire, formerly conservative churches have been forced into open opposition by the sheer inhumanity of subfascist practice and the stripping away of other protective resources from a defenseless population.¹⁴⁷ It is a remarkable and central fact of modern history that the United States has sponsored and continues to support the subfascist state—its police-military arm, its torture, and its savagely exploitative economic policies—and has called forth in country after country a church response as the last refuge of abused majorities.¹⁴⁸

4.4 The Dominican Republic: U.S. Model for Third World Development

In his *Stages of Economic Growth*, Walt W. Rostow describes a development process for Third World countries that come into our orbit: they become gradually like *us*, with advanced industrial technologies and democratic institutions. The Dominican Republic

offers an earthy illustration of the reality of development processes under U.S. auspices. It is an especially apt and relevant case for this reason: with and after the invasion of 1965 the U.S. reasserted effective control over that small country and has thoroughly dominated its politics and economics. Given the absence of any threatening counterforces, we can say that in the Dominican Republic the flow of events surely must have been in conformity with the desires of the U.S. foreign policy leadership.

It will be recalled that the U.S. invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 to prevent the displacement of the relatively benign fascist regime of Donald Reid Cabral by the Constitutionalist regime of Juan Bosch, who had been overthrown by a military coup in 1963—without eliciting any U.S. intervention to save *him* and his brief experiment in democratic government. The rationalization by Lyndon Johnson and his spokesmen, alleging an imminent threat of Communism, were convincingly shown by Theodore Draper and others to have been a hypocritical cover for a positive preference for fascism over a less reliable and less controllable democratic reformist government.¹⁴⁹ The invasion of 1965 reestablished a firm U.S. grip on the island. As Bosch put it in June, 1975, “This country is not pro-American, it is United States property.”¹⁵⁰ What then have been the main characteristics of the Dominican model of Third World development, as seen in a country under close U.S. surveillance and control?

The first characteristic has been extensive and systematic terror. In the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Brazil, three client fascist systems that came into being with explicit U.S. connivance, by a strange coincidence para-military “death squads” quickly made their appearance and went on a rampage against political dissenters, petty criminals, and sometimes purely arbitrary victims. Amnesty International called special attention to “the numerous political assassinations carried out by Death Squads (such as the notorious *La Banda*) that have been openly tolerated and supported by the National Police. In 1970 it was alleged that there was one death or ‘disappearance’ every 34 hours.”¹⁵¹ In July, 1971, Norman Gall alleged that in the post-1965 era, the number of political murders in the Dominican Republic exceeded that of any comparable period under the monstrous Trujillo.¹⁵² Gall noted further that

The Santo Domingo newspaper *El Nacional* last December 30 filled a page and a half of newsprint with the details of 186 political murders and thirty disappearances during 1970. The Dominican terror resembles the current wave of political killings in Guatemala...in that the paramilitary death squads are organized by the armed forces and police, which in both cases over the years have been given heavy U.S. material and advisory support.

Gall went on to note that the essential function of political terror in the Dominican Republic has been to control the slum population, “which was the main force that defeated

the Dominican military in the 1965 revolution.” The *Wall Street Journal* reported on September 9, 1971 that “the conservative Catholic Church hierarchy has condemned the ‘institutionalization’ of terror.” The *Journal* also claimed that the opinion was widespread in the Dominican Republic that the United States was behind the paramilitary death squads. Whether or not this specific allegation was true, the *Journal* observed that “the embassy has done nothing publicly to dissociate itself from the terror. The U.S. continues to provide substantial aid, training, equipment, and arms, to the Dominican police and army.”

Since 1971 the rate of killing has slackened, but political assassinations continue and the incarceration and torture of political prisoners still plays a key role in maintaining stability. Amnesty International recently stated that “precise, detailed and consistent information...indicates that practices amounting to serious violations of human rights are still going on: the arbitrary arrest, kidnapping, and assassination of the regime’s political opponents; the removal of certain political prisoners to isolation in provincial jails and military forts; deplorable prison conditions, ill-treatment and police brutality inflicted on many detainees...and the continued detention of prisoners once their sentences expire.”¹⁵³

The U.S. State Department, on the other hand, in its 1978 Human Rights Report to Congress, finds a “substantial reduction in incidents of military and police repression,” a working “constitutional democracy,” and “over a dozen political parties...officially recognized and freely active although the 1974 elections were marred by some incidents of military intervention on behalf of the President’s reelection.” On this last point, the Washington Office of Latin America notes that “the State Department demolishes its own argument. Official recognition means little and political parties are not really free if the military acts against them during an election. Harassment of opposition forces has not ceased, despite Balaguer’s claim to have ordered the military to remain neutral. In the fall of 1977, as pre-election campaigning for 1978 was beginning, a local headquarters of the social democratic opposition party PRD was burned to the ground and a PRD official, Samuelo Santan Melo, was murdered.”¹⁵⁴ Subsequently, of course, the military intervened more comprehensively to avert Balaguer’s defeat in May, 1978, seizing the ballot boxes and arresting or driving underground many leaders of the PRD, before pressure from both the Dominican elite and the Carter administration eventually forced the military and Balaguer to allow a transfer of the presidency to Guzman. A wealthy landowner himself, Guzman would not have been running at all, and would not have been allowed to take office, if he had posed a threat of serious reform.¹⁵⁵ The military and its external sponsor

assure that the new PRD operates within a very narrow boundary of policy actions.¹⁵⁶ All the more reason then for the State Department to be pleased with the progress of the Dominican Republic, to be reassured by the promises of its leaders, and to find that this client state deserves the funds still allocated to it for military assistance.¹⁵⁷

A second characteristic of the Dominican Republic model is widespread venality. Alan Riding wrote in 1975 that “the blatant corruption of military and civilian sectors of the government is spreading bitterness among the urban masses, whose wages have been held down despite high inflation rates since 1960.”¹⁵⁸ The military and police in this client state are numerous and well taken care of. According to Riding, one method whereby Balaguer retained control was “by openly allowing senior officials to enrich themselves. With official salaries of \$700 a month, for example, most of the country’s 37 generals live in huge modern houses, drive limousines, and own cattle ranches.”

More recently, Jon Nordheimer wrote that

Corruption among the generals is almost as legendary as is their ineptitude. In the first place there are about twice as many generals—around 40—as there should be for the size of the military forces. Generals are promoted on the basis of family, friendship and business connections...It is common knowledge that Lieut. Gen. Juan Beauchamps Javier, Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, owns a \$300,000 yacht in partnership with a Dominican businessman and that Maj. Gen. Neit Nivar Siejas, the commander of the national police, is part owner of a major Santo Domingo hotel and gambling casino.¹⁵⁹

A recent report to the Securities and Exchange Commission by Philip Morris showed: (1) a \$16,000 payment to a Dominican tax official for a favorable tax ruling; (2) the payment of \$120,000 to various Dominican legislators for passage of a law that would give Philip Morris a privileged position in the Virginia tobacco line; and (3) monthly payments of \$1,000 by Philip Morris to Juan Balaguer himself.¹⁶⁰ The president of a presumably independent state taking payoffs from a private foreign business firm would seem rather sensational, but this passed off virtually unnoticed in the United States. Gulf & Western made \$146,000 in “questionable” payments through foreign subsidiaries in 1976, and although the distribution of those payments was not revealed by the SEC, the usefulness of such a lubricant in the Dominican Republic and G&W’s large place there rouses plausible suspicions.¹⁶¹

U.S. firms get business done in the Dominican Republic not only by payoffs but by putting important people on their payrolls and by building both personal and financial ties to the local elite. Thus in the mid-1970s the brother of the important Director of Tourism was a vice president of G&W’s sugar-producing subsidiary in the Dominican Republic. G&W is also reported to have established “cordial relations” with General of the Police Tadeo Guerrero, who was active in the destruction of the last strong independent union in

the sugar business.¹⁶²

Gulf & Western is the largest private landowner and employer in the country, with some 8% of all arable land, mainly in sugar, owner of a large resort complex, and with investments in some 90 Dominican businesses. G&W's annual sales are larger than the GNP of the Dominican Republic, and while it does not by itself control the country, its size, internal connections, and the background support of the external sponsor of Dominican subfascism, give the company a great deal of leverage and might even justify the designation of the Dominican Republic as a "company country."¹⁶³ Its rapid expansion within the Dominican Republic since 1967 has been a result, in part, of the great profitability of its sugar operations and an 18% ceiling on profit repatriation.¹⁶⁴

A potential competitor to Gulf & Western's large seaside resort at La Romana, M. Wayne Fuller, ran into a steady series of obstacles in the early 1970s from the Tourism Office in importing supplies and obtaining tax concessions supposedly available to foreign enterprises. In April, 1975, a government decree was signed expropriating Fuller's beach-land property—for use as a public park—helped along possibly by the fact that the president of another G&W subsidiary was an advisor to the Dominican Republic Park Commission. This decree was rescinded when Fuller mobilized *his* forces, including various army officers and Balaguer himself.¹⁶⁵ In brief, foreign interests are exceedingly powerful as they curry and buy favor and mobilize their elite cadres, with whom they jointly dominate and loot this small dependency.

A third characteristic of the Dominican model has been a radical sweetening of conditions for foreign business and a strong reliance on foreign investment for national development. As in Greece under the Colonels' regime of 1967-1973, great stress has been placed on tourism and investments related to tourism (resort hotels, airport development). An Investment Incentives Law of 1968 removed any restrictions on foreign ownership, extended generous tax and duty exemptions to new investments, and guaranteed capital and profit repatriation. U.S. companies have swarmed into agriculture, food processing, mining, banking and hotel and resort complexes. In 1969 G&W became manager of a large tax-free zone adjacent to G&W's Cajuiles golf course. One of the many Dominican Republic ads in the *New York Times*—funded in good part by "contributions" from foreign companies in the country—notes that companies settling within the G&W free zone "are given special duty free import and export privileges. They are granted a 10-year tax-free status." The reporter Michael Flannery describes the G&W "free zone" in the following language:

Shotgun-toting customs agents and national police man check points at entrances to the free zone, which is surrounded by a high chain-link fence topped with multiple strands of barbed wire...CNTD [National Confederation of Dominican Workers] and visiting officials of the AFL-CIO charged that the zone had the air of a “modern slave-labor camp.” They said the carefully controlled access was designed not only to prevent smuggling, but to thwart efforts to organize the workers into unions that would force an improvement in conditions.¹⁶⁶

A fourth characteristic of the Dominican Republic model, related to the preceding, is effective government pacification of the labor force, a crucial requirement for an appropriate “climate of investment.” As noted above, the systematic police terror since 1965 has returned the large urban proletariat and sub-proletariat to the desired state of passivity, and the countryside has been more easily kept in line by periodic violence and threats. The Dominican Republic advertisement section in the *New York Times* of January 28, 1973, has a heading entitled “Industrialists Dream of Chances Like These,” featuring the *low*, low wage rates, running between 25 and 50 cents an hour. The ad stresses the role of the *law* in fixing hours and wages and allowing the free import of foreign technicians.¹⁶⁷ There is no mention of any trade unions, but employers will properly read between the lines that unions have been broken and pacified (with the assistance of George Meany and the AFL-CIO). Of special interest is the regular use of government troops and police to break up independent unions. The agricultural union Sindicato Unido, which operated the fields now owned by G&W was broken by police action in 1966 and 1967, and a number of its leaders, including the union lawyer Guido Gil were arrested and killed by the forces of law and order.¹⁶⁸ Another major foreign enterprise, Falconbridge Nickel, also successfully broke a union with army and police assistance in 1970. A *Wall Street Journal* report of September 9, 1971 states that “when a union attempted to organize construction workers at a foreign-owned ferronickel mill project last year, Mr. Balaguer sent in the army to help straighten things out. While the soldiers kept order, the contractors fired 32 allegedly leftist leaders...The strike was broken in eight days.” Matters had not changed much in the mid-70s. An *ad hoc* human rights group that visited the Dominican Republic in 1975 reported that “working people have been prevented by nearly every conceivable means from forming and joining trade union organizations.”¹⁶⁹ A union organizing effort in the G&W free trade zone in the mid-1970s was broken with the help of the police in arresting, jailing, and deporting labor organizers, and with the use of “troops in full combat gear armed with submachine guns” to break up organizing meetings. Flannery states that

Officials of the Dominican labor ministry told organizers that—contrary to the paper guarantees of the republic’s laws—workers would not be allowed to form a union in the industrial free zone.¹⁷⁰

On the matter of labor unions, the 1977 State Department Human Rights Report has the

following “information”: “Labor unions are permitted to function and numerous labor unions exist, including some associated with opposition parties, but under some government controls.” That exhausts that topic.

In containing unions and rendering them docile the Dominican elite has had the steadfast support of the top echelons of the AFL-CIO, which has long cooperated closely with the CIA and international business firms in this unsavory operation. Its arm CONATRAL actually helped destroy the pro-labor Bosch regime in 1963 and has steadily supported its totalitarian and anti-labor successors.¹⁷¹ Presumably their blind hatred of Communism and radicalism in general has led Meany and his close followers to sell out systematically the interests of labor in the Dominican Republic and in other U.S. satellites. Meany and some other labor bosses actually have a more direct interest in the pacification of labor in the Dominican Republic. Meany, his number two man Lane Kirkland, Alexander Barkan, director of COPE, the AFL-CIO political arm, and Edward J. Carlough, president of the sheet metal workers, all are stockholders in the 15,000-acre Punta Cana resort and plantation in the Dominican Republic. In order to clear the ground for this enterprise designed for the Beautiful People a large number of squatters were evicted by the army.¹⁷²

A fifth characteristic of the Dominican model, following naturally from the preceding, is the sharp deterioration in the well-being of the bulk of the population. In serving the interests of a traditional and expatriate elite, the Dominican Republic has been turned into a tourist and industrial paradise, with a “25-cent-minimum wage rate and hard-working peaceful labor” [sic: translated, no threat of strikes from any independent unions], and with four tax free zones “filled with manufacturers of brushes, brassieres, batteries, electronic devices, wigs, undergarments, components and consumer goods.”¹⁷³ The effects of the 1965 counterrevolution and the installation of the Dominican Republic model on income distribution and welfare were summarized by the *Wall Street Journal* (9 September 1971) as follows:

The middle and upper classes are better off, as are the lower classes lucky enough to have jobs. But work is scarce; the poor are poorer and more numerous. “Per capita income is about the same as before 1965, but it’s less equitably distributed,” a foreign economic expert says. He estimates per capita income at \$240—three times that of Haiti but half that of Cuba... Most of the 370 young women who work at La Romana earn 30 cents to 40 cents an hour last year... Malnutrition is widespread. Says George B. Mathues, director of CARE in the Dominican Republic: “You see kids with swollen bellies all over the country, even here in Santo Domingo.” Food production is hampered by semi-feudal land tenure. At last count, less than 1% of the farmers owned 47.5% of the land, while 82% farmed fewer than 10 acres... Land reform has moved with glacial speed... Most Dominican children don’t go beyond the third grade; only one in five reaches the sixth grade.¹⁷⁴

G&W acknowledged in 1978 that cane cutter money wages had not kept up with

inflation in the years since 1966,¹⁷⁵ and there is other evidence to the same effect,¹⁷⁶ which suggests a probable further absolute fall in the real income of the majority and a further shift toward inequality in income shares. There is also evidence that the nutritional deficit of the Dominican majority is huge.¹⁷⁷ Michael Flannery cites a report which states that in 1972 “a mere 11 percent of Dominicans drink milk, 4 percent eat meat and 2 percent eat eggs. Fish are plentiful in the waters off the island, but draw better prices in other markets. So, few Dominicans include fish in their protein-poor diet.”¹⁷⁸

In the Dominican Republic we see the working out once again of the familiar repression-exploitation-trickle-down model of economic growth. The export-oriented agriculture is, as is common throughout the empire, displacing an already underemployed peasantry and rural work force, increasing the mass of dispossessed and malnourished. The unemployment rate has been extraordinarily high, on the order of 30%-40%.¹⁷⁹ The mass of the population has been entirely excluded from any opportunities for economic advancement, education, or political participation. The large majority as in Brazil, Indonesia, or the Philippines, is a cost to be minimized and a threat to be contained. The process of development observed here is acceptable on the assumption implicit throughout the empire—that only the welfare of the local and expatriate elites need be taken into account. The decline in the welfare of the majority, their exclusion from any power whatsoever, and the cultural degradation of the Dominican Republic, are obviously beside the point. “Stability” has been brought to the country, and from the perspective of U.S. investment opportunities, the Dominican Republic deserves the glowing description of a U.S. Embassy report describing it as a “little Brazil” and “one of the brightest spots in Latin America.”

4.5 Latin America: Proliferating Subfascism

“Friends and Fellow Christians, it is time that you realize that our continent is becoming one gigantic prison, and in some regions one vast cemetery...we—with the exception of Cuba—are trapped in the same system. We all move within one economic-political-military complex in which one finds committed [the] fabulous interests of [the] financial groups that dominate the life of your country and the creole oligarchies of our Latin American nations. Both groups, more allied today than ever, have held back time after time the great transformations that our people need and desperately demand.” (A Latin American Church group)¹⁸⁰

“The dominant presence of this inevitable parameter—National Security—imposes the tremendous burden of an economy which is viscerally destructive to the normal expectations of development and welfare which move all peoples...Hence a new dilemma—Welfare or Security—previously pointed out by Goering in less just but highly suggestive terms: ‘more guns, less butter.’ In fact, there is no getting around the necessity of sacrificing Welfare to the benefit of Security when the latter is actually endangered. Those people who refuse to admit this have learned in the dust of defeat a well-deserved lesson.” (A Brazilian General)¹⁸¹

4.5.1 The Nazi Parallel: The National Security State and the Churches

The two statements quoted above bring out some central features of modern Latin America. A close study of recent trends—including the specific totalitarian ideology of the generals, the system of ideological manipulation and terror, the diaspora, and the defensive response of the churches (and their harassment by the military juntas)—reveals startling similarities with patterns of thought and behavior under European fascism, especially under Nazism. Fascist ideology has flowed into Latin America directly and indirectly. Large numbers of Nazi refugees came to Latin America during and after World War II, and important ingredients of fascist ideology have been indirectly routed into that area through the U.S. military and intelligence establishment. Whatever the source, however, it has met a need of the local and foreign elites that dominate the area, and has been modified to meet their special requirements.

The ideology designated the “National Security Doctrine” (NSD) now prevails among the military elites that rule at least eight Latin American states—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. The doctrine has three main elements:¹⁸² (1) that the state is absolute and the individual is nothing;¹⁸³ (2) that every state is involved in permanent warfare, its present form being Communism versus the Free World;¹⁸⁴ and (3) that control over “subversion” is possible only through domination by the natural leadership in the struggle against subversion, namely the armed forces.¹⁸⁵ The first two elements of the NSD closely parallel Nazi ideology, which laid great stress on the organic Volkstaat and the deadly combat in process between the forces of good and evil (Bolshevism, Jewry). Geopolitics is also a favorite source of ideological nourishment to the Latin military elite, as it was for the Nazis. Nazi doctrine did not give primacy to the armed forces, although they were assigned an important place, but the Leader and the Party played an elite role. The special place of the armed forces in the NSD reflects in part the self-interested rationalization of the privileged and dominant military elite; it also represents the choice of vehicle by the colossus of the north, which has long invested in the military establishment as potentially “a major force for constructive social change in the American republics”¹⁸⁶ (Nelson Rockefeller).

An important ingredient of Nazi ideology, anti-Semitism, is absent from the NSD, although it has found a home with the military of certain countries (specifically, Argentina, where there has been a long anti-Semitic tradition). But the NSD also lacks any element of egalitarianism or notion of human community, both present in grotesquely perverted form in Nazi ideology, so that the Latin American version has been well adapted to justifying and institutionalizing extreme inequality and domination by a small elite. The

NSD is not a doctrine with ugly potential consequences for specific minorities; it is one that fits the need for disregard and spoliation of the *majority*. The special place of army and police merely assures that the military elite will share in the spoliation along with the traditional elite group. It is, therefore, an appropriate doctrine for what we have been calling “subfascism.”

Since the generals sponsoring the National Security Doctrine have been nurtured by and dependent on the U.S. military-intelligence establishment, and look to the United States as the heartland of anti-Communism and Freedom, it is little wonder that the economic doctrinal counterpart to the NSD is quite congenial to the interests of multinational business. The military juntas have adopted a “free enterprise—blind growth” model, on the alleged geopolitical rationale that growth means power, disregarding the fact that *dependent* growth means *foreign* power. Since profits equal investment equal growth equal power, it works out that state support for large interests—domestic and foreign—and neglect of the masses, is sound policy. We saw earlier that in the economics of client fascism, that is, National Security Economics, the welfare of the masses is no longer a system objective—the masses become a cost of goods sold, something to be minimized—so that although the military juntas sometimes speak of long run benefits trickling down to the lower orders, this is really an after-thought and is not to be taken too seriously.

Furthermore, since the world is one of good and evil, with “no room for comfortable neutralism” (Pinochet, echoing a familiar refrain of his U.S. mentor), and since free enterprise-growth-profits-USA are good, anybody challenging these concepts or their consequences is *ipso facto* a Communist-subversive-enemy. This is a logical deduction from NSD principles, and it is also clearly just what General Maxwell Taylor had in mind in telling the students of the police academy of the lessons of Vietnam and the need for anticipatory counter-subversion.¹⁸⁷ It also means that any resistance to business power and privilege in the interests of equity, or on the basis of an alternative view of desirable social ends or means, is a National Security and police problem. This applies to such organizations as peasant leagues, unions, student organizations or community or political groupings that might afford protection to the weak or threaten to become a political counterforce to elite domination. From the standpoint of the multinationals and latifundists, this is superb doctrine; reform is equated with subversion, the work force is kept in disarray by state power, and nothing stands in the way of organizing economic life in MNC-latifundist interests that can not be taken care of by a few well-placed bribes. As Nelson Rockefeller has said, in dealing with Latin American countries, for whom

democracy “is a very subtle and difficult problem,” we must be prepared to sacrifice some of our philosophical principles in the interest of helping “meet the basic needs of the people of the hemisphere.”^{[188](#)}

In Nazi Germany too, as in other totalitarian societies, a primary aim of the controlling leadership was the destruction of any organizational threat that might challenge the attainment of “state” ends; and unions, students and professional organizations, and community groups and political parties were infiltrated, harassed, destroyed, or brought under state control. The most powerful bases of organized resistance in Nazi Germany were the churches, which provided the “most active, most effective, and most consistent” opposition to Nazi terror.^{[189](#)} The churches were so deeply rooted in their communities that it was difficult to attack them openly, although the Nazis tried from the beginning to undermine and destroy church authority. The churches were not only the first large organizations left intact that began to resist Hitlerism as organizations, “they also remained unique in this respect throughout the period from 1933 to 1945, although their resistance remained limited to certain issues and methods.”^{[190](#)} Throughout World War II one important segment of the Protestant Church (the Confessing Church) refused to pray for military victory, and by the war’s end many hundreds of clergymen had died in concentration camps.^{[191](#)}

The analogy here with Latin American experience is striking, although it has been diligently avoided in the mass media of the United States. The National Security States, like Hitler, have used informers and force to destroy or bring under state control all protective organizations of the working class, peasants, rural workers and sub-proletariat: a church group’s description of Paraguay, where “the government’s objective is to suppress any person or organization that strives to help those living in miserable poverty, that is to say 80% of the population,”^{[192](#)} is widely applicable in the NSD world. This repression is not undertaken out of sadistic impulses. Rather, as the church throughout the empire now recognizes, “this whole universe of atomized workers, powerless and obliged to humiliate themselves,” are kept in that condition for sound economic reasons, given the ends sought and the model of economic development employed by the military juntas.^{[193](#)}

From the inception of this process, and especially since the Brazilian coup of 1964, the churches have been pressed into opposition to subfascism, just as under Nazism, as the last institutional refuge of the population against state terror and state-protected and state-sponsored exploitation. Initially, again in close analogy with Nazi experience, the coming into power of the National Security State was greeted by the church in a country like

Brazil with mixed feelings, and some positive expectations on the part of the more conservative church leaders. But subfascist processes steadily drove the church into a position of increasingly unified hostility, despite efforts by the military junta to alternatively threaten and attempt to bribe the church leaders into quiescence, if not support. Church opposition has been bothersome to the Brazilian junta, in part because the church remains a competing institutional power still providing a base of opposition and some protective cover for the pack animals (the 80% plus). Furthermore, the church and religion are part of the ceremonial apparatus of the Christian-West-Free World, and however little the generals may regard Christian principles, the symbols should be available for manipulation of the lower orders. But they have not been readily available, and the conflict between the churches and military juntas has escalated in Brazil and throughout the empire.

The reasons for the scope and strength of church resistance in Latin America and elsewhere include certain features of the churches themselves, such as the post-Vatican II internal discussions and subsequent democratization, and the institutional shift in church constituency and support. With the middle and upper classes—the traditional basis of support and personnel—gradually abandoning the church after World War II, the constituency of the church has gradually shifted to the 80% plus that is voiceless, powerless and outside the orbit of interest under subfascism. As the church has reached into the communities of the poor it has been obliged to *see* and *feel* the problems of this exploited mass, and the result has been a further democratization of the church, expressions of remorse at its elite supportive role in the past, and a new concern for meeting the needs of all people now: “The Holy Spirit is no longer a privilege of the hierarchy or of the religious; the Spirit does not only teach piety and obedience in the teaching of the church. The Spirit shows itself in the new martyrs, in the daring of the communities and their ministers, in the testimony given to the world by the humble and poor people.”¹⁹⁴

It is important to recognize that the dominant elements of the Catholic Church of Latin America were, and in important respects still are, quite conservative. It has been pushed into relatively unified and vigorous opposition against its desires and traditions, in large part by brutalities and injustice of a scale and severity that gave it no alternative.¹⁹⁵ The quality of the New Brazil that has evoked this church response can be illustrated by its treatment of abandoned children, vast numbers of whom wander and forage in the cities.¹⁹⁶ These children are regarded strictly as a police problem. Nothing is done *for*

them, but they are periodically rounded up, put into police trucks, and transported to other Brazilian states, with a warning to stay away. If something positive is done for them, *this* is regarded as a menace. Lernoux reports that “in a recent typical case, a young teenager was arrested in Vitoria for trying to organize the city’s abandoned children into a work cooperative. After he was beaten and tortured, the boy was sodomized in the local jail.”^{[197](#)}

The treatment of the mass of rural poor has been on the same humanistic plane. The military regime has encouraged and subsidized the shift to export crops such as soybeans and cattle, without the slightest concern, provision, or consideration for the (non-existent) opportunities for the millions of dispossessed:

Their lands, houses and crops are wiped out by the savage growth of latifundia and big agribusiness. Their living and working conditions are becoming more difficult. In a tragic contradiction, in which the government economic favors multiply herds of cattle and enlarge plantations, the small laborer sees his family’s food supply diminishing.^{[198](#)}

Volkswagen, Tio Tinto Zinc, Swift Meat Packing, and others have been receiving tax write-offs to develop cattle ranches, while the indigenous people are written off in the process by their government.^{[199](#)} Italy’s Liguigas was allowed to buy six million acres of land in the heart of the territory of the Xavantas Indians, with 60 Indians killed in the eviction process.^{[200](#)}

The state functions to prevent by force any defense of the rural majority and to allow the powerful to violate the already feeble law with impunity. A great many clergy have been brutalized for making the most elemental defenses of maltreated individuals. Although under Brazil’s legal code peasants who have worked the land for 10 years or more are entitled to ownership rights, those rights are widely ignored and in any conflict are usually resolved by the force of the strong. In one contested case a land development company “simply bulldozed the village of Santa Teresinha off the map. When Father Francisco Jentel protested against the destruction of a health clinic built by the peasants, he was jailed and later sentenced to ten years in prison for ‘inciting the people to revolt’.”^{[201](#)}

The Catholic Church has not been able to swallow passively the intensified post-1964 day-by-day spoliation of the Indians and peasantry. Bishop Dom Pedro Casadaliga has kept up a steady flow of denunciations of the policies of force, fraud and subsidization of rural dispossession by the military regime. He has exasperated the ranchers and military of Sao Felix by organizing peasant cooperatives, schools and health units and urging the peasants to “unite and know your legal rights.”^{[202](#)} The Bishop points out that there is only one private doctor in the prelature of Sao Felix, which covers 150,000 square kilometers,

but the military regime still discourages church medical assistance efforts: “There used to be a nun nurse who worked in the hospital [the Santa Izabel Indian Hospital]. However, she was expelled and prohibited from taking care of Indians or *posseiros*. We opened a mobile health unit in Sao Felix which was closed by the Secretary of Health of Mato Grosso. Of the four mobile units of the region three are closed and the other is open only sporadically when a doctor of the army or air force is passing through.”²⁰³ Efforts to organize the peasantry, even for limited self-help activities, have been viewed with the deepest suspicion by the leaders of subfascism, and this form of subversion has led to the arrest, harassment and exile of numerous clergy in Brazil and elsewhere in the empire.

Bishop Casadaliga was the first of many Brazilian bishops to be subject to military interrogation. Many have suffered more severely. Dom Adriano Hipolito, the Bishop of Nova Iguazu, who has often denounced the Brazilian Anti-Communist Alliance (AAB) as a “bunch of thugs directed and protected by the police” was kidnapped by the AAB, beaten, stripped, painted red, and left lying on a deserted road.²⁰⁴ And in October, 1976, Father Joao Brunier, who had gone to the police station with Bishop Casadaliga to protest the torture of two peasant women, was simply shot dead by a policeman (who was eventually “apprehended” and then “escaped”). Hundreds of priests and higher officials of the Latin American churches have been tortured, murdered or driven into exile. Six aides of Archbishop Camara have been murdered, and he is quite aware that only his international reputation has so far saved him from a similar fate.

The Latin American churches have been unified and radicalized by subfascist terror and exploitation. They have learned by bitter experience the roots and consequences of these processes. The Church in Brazil now points out frequently and with great clarity and courage that the National Security Doctrine is a cover for totalitarian violence against ordinary people and is a means of class warfare. It is interesting to see the church preaching with passion for the rights of the individual against a state created and supported by the heartland of “freedom”—“On the level of purpose, the State exists for persons. The person, as a subject of natural inalienable rights, is the origin, center and end of society...It is in this right that the power of authority of the state is based. All force practiced beyond and outside of this right is violence.”²⁰⁵ The church has also become more clear-eyed and explicit on the class bias and massive inhumanity of the development model of growth, and on the role of the U.S. and its military and economic interests in bringing into existence and sustaining the subfascist state. On the benefits of the Brazilian “miracle,” one church document notes that

Five percent (5 million out of 100 million) do attain something. But those who really have the advantage are the ones who are financing our “growth,” those from abroad, the foreigners. If a bank will not extend credit without a guarantee of profit, much less will the foreigners finance our development and dispense with their profits. Our external debt amounts to about \$10 billion.²⁰⁶

External interests not only sustain oppression by their support of the military governments; they are more directly in the picture as developers, expropriators and strike-breakers. Bishop Casadaliga claims that in Sao Felix where latifundias are frequently owned by MNCs, the foreign entities have fought his mild efforts more aggressively than the locals: “Of the attacks I have suffered the majority have been ordered by the administrators and technocrats of the multinational latifundios.”²⁰⁷ The Open Letter quoted at the beginning of this section is more passionate still in describing the sorrowful reality that has “demolished the image of ‘the great democracy of the North’,” including “the scandalous intervention of the United States in the installation and maintenance of military regimes” throughout Latin America; “the shameful Panamanian enclave with its military training centers” in which the murderers receive their higher education from U.S. instructors in techniques of “systematic persecution” and “scientifically perfected torture”; the activities of “the CIA and other agencies of penetration and espionage”; “the sometimes subtle and other times brazen domination and colonization practices” which have gradually eliminated the possibilities of independent economic development; and the “silent genocide, killing with hunger, with malnutrition, with tuberculosis the children of working families without resources.”

The church-state struggle has become general in varying degrees throughout the expanding subfascist component of the empire. In Latin America, only in the few countries that retain a democratic order has an open conflict failed to emerge. In the now dominant terror states, including South Korea and the Philippines,²⁰⁸ the clergy is under attack and is fighting back with the non-violent weapons at its disposal. It cannot be overstressed that while the church increasingly calls for major social changes, the vast bulk of its efforts have been directed toward the protection of the most elemental human rights—to vote, to have the laws enforced without favor, to be free from physical abuse, and to be able to organize, assemble, and petition for betterment. Most sinister for the leaders of subfascism is any sponsorship of organizational or self-help efforts that might give the underclasses not only a sense of personal dignity but also some notion that they have rights and might exercise some small modicum of power.

The hostility of the National Security States to church support for the majority has reached the level of cooperative efforts at intimidation. In the summer of 1976 a major church meeting in Ecuador was interrupted when “40 barbarians armed with machine

guns, revolvers, and tear gas bombs burst in on us. None of us was allowed to touch any of our personal belongings, not even to put on a pair of socks. We were pushed at gunpoint into a waiting bus—80 of us crammed into a space meant for 50. We had no idea what was happening, and it was useless to ask those gangsters for an explanation.”²⁰⁹ The group, which included 15 foreign bishops and two foreign archbishops, was imprisoned overnight, and the foreign contingent was expelled the next day on the ground that it had been a “subversive meeting” (on subfascist principles, no doubt correct). One factor explaining the incident may have been the hostility to the host, Bishop Leonidas Proano, who had long been in conflict with the local ranchers over his defense of the ownership rights of the Indians. Church sources claim that a more potent factor was the increasingly close relations between Ecuador and the other subfascist states, particularly Brazil and Chile. At the time of the meeting 10 Chilean secret police were in Ecuador helping set up an intelligence and “security” network. The Chilean secret police arranged for a rock-throwing reception for the three Chilean bishops at the Santiago airport upon their return from Ecuador, and the Chilean press used the incident to demonstrate the Communist-subversive qualities of the bishops. The Chilean bishops concluded from their investigation of the episode that it had been a response to the pressures of “friendly governments” which had been applied to Ecuador.²¹⁰

The conflict between the church and the state intensifies as subfascist abuse becomes a more integral component of the reigning system, the church responds, and the National Security State brooks no opposition: “If we don’t subscribe to ‘their Church,’ we are subversive. But how can we accept a mentality that endorses torture and murder, that is so totally unchristian?”²¹¹ And a Paraguayan priest says that “the bishops are arriving at a point where they must choose between their people and the military...It isn’t a political choice between right and left but a humanitarian one. In Paraguay, for example, conservative and liberal bishops are united in their opposition to Alfredo Stroessner’s regime. Even the military vicar signed the last pastoral letter denouncing government repression.”²¹² But the churches resist without the huge resources of the state, without access to the government-controlled media, and without the power of physical coercion. On the international plane the churches also face the most formidable obstacle of all—namely, United States sponsorship and support for the National Security State. Thus economic and military aid flows to the military juntas and the United States protects them diplomatically, economically and militarily—militarily, of course, mainly against their own populations via counterinsurgency and police aid. The United States has actively cooperated in overthrowing reformers or radicals in democratic systems (Brazil, Chile),

but it has never quite been able to throw its weight towards democracy and away from subfascist gangsters even when the gangsters have stood alone with their U.S.-trained militias and weapons against a unified population, as we witness in Nicaragua at the time of writing.

Because the National Security State is U.S.-sponsored and supported and meets U.S. criteria on the fundamentals, there is another important international consequence: the mass media in the United States play down and essentially suppress the evidence of the enormous inhumanities and institutionalized violence of these U.S. satellites. The *trial* of a single Soviet dissident, Anatol Shcharansky, received more newspaper space in 1978 than the several thousand official *murders* in Latin America during the same year, not to speak of the vast number of lesser events such as tortures and massive dispossession.²¹³ Information on Latin American horrors is readily available from church and other sources eager to tell the ghastly story, but—to put the matter baldly—the sponsors of class warfare under subfascism are hardly eager to focus attention on its victims. Just as in the case of warfare in Vietnam, both killing and ruthless exploitation at a distance are best done by proxy or through impersonal machinery, with eyes averted. The Free World establishment wisely chooses to focus on movements of the “gross national product” of Brazil, without too much attention to who gets what and *how*. The Free World media also concentrate on “terror,” defined as we have seen so as to exclude official violence by definition²¹⁴; and the media allow the world of subfascism to be viewed largely through the eyes of the torturers and U.S. officials and businessmen. U.S. power and interest have put a communications lid on the fate of the great majority of the population of Latin America under U.S.-sponsored subfascism. Thus the churches fight a lonely battle as the last institutional protection of the mass of the population, with the primary enemy an absentee ownership interest supported by a super-power. In Latin America it is widely recognized that the origin and preservation of the National Security State rests on U.S. support. It is the ultimate Orwellism that this same superpower is thought in the West to be fighting a noble battle for “human rights.”

4.5.2 Notes on Some Insecurity States in Latin America

Security, as a good of the nation, is incompatible with a permanent insecurity of the people. Insecurity is marked by arbitrary repressive measures without possibility of defense, compulsory internments, unexplainable disappearances, degrading processes and interrogation and acts of violence done in the easy bravery of clandestine terrorism and in frequent and almost total impunity. (“Christian Requirements of a Political Order,” a charter produced by the 15th General Assembly of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, February 1977, reprinted in LADOC, Jan.-Feb. 1978)

The Latin America horror chamber has been so extensively described by human rights

organizations, refugees, priests, Latin American intellectuals, and others that we will make no effort here at a systematic review.²¹⁵ Such materials are accessible in books, reports and articles in journals, although these normally reach only a tiny segment of the population. The mass media spare the general populace such painful and unrewarding fare. Scattered information can be found in the mass media, but it is episodic, very sparse in relation to the human issues involved, and generally devoid of any indication of the systematic character of the reduction of Latin America to barbarism or its roots in U.S. support and global interests and policies.

The media also employ a number of other devices that assure sympathetic treatment of U.S.-sponsored subfascism. These include: reliance on the juntas themselves for information; an acceptance of their verbal statements as to objectives and good intentions²¹⁶; a focus on alleged “improvements,” on the “problems” faced by the juntas, on the infighting among the “moderates” and “hardliners,” on the unfortunate lack of control by the moderates (at the top) over the hardliners (who kill people); and an avoidance of details on their gory practices and victims. For example, in an article using all of these formulas, Joanne Omang of the *Washington Post* offers the following among a stream of clichés: “Videla has maintained the slow and stubbornly cautious pattern of decisions”; “Videla and the other junta officers have kept open their lines of communications with the country’s various political elements, even though all political and union activities are officially suspended and many leaders are in jail” [communication is easier if you know just where they are]; “Everybody agrees that the junta knows what the problems are”; “Unions...are about to be granted organizational rights”; “The daily *La Opinion* estimated that leftist terrorists lost 4,000 persons in 1976.”²¹⁷ The word “torture” does not appear in the article, nor figures on non-leftist non-terrorists killed (given the probable source of the 4,000, they are probably included in that figure), nor any details even on economic facts. Juan de Onis, who tops the field in the deployment of pro-junta clichés, notes that in Argentina “Many union delegates and clandestine activists [that is, people who, if in the open, would be shot] have been killed. This contributed to the human rights violations in question...,” which must be admitted to be a fair inference.²¹⁸ Elsewhere, de Onis explains that “the military junta headed by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, Commander in Chief of the army, has been unable to control the right-wing extremists, who are clearly linked to the military and police, despite the declared goal of the junta to exercise a monopoly of violence.”²¹⁹ Since the “extremists” are “clearly linked” to the police and military, one obvious hypothesis is that they *are* controlled by their superior officers, who find it convenient for PR purposes to pretend to lack control.

De Onis does not consider this possibility.

As a further example, an AP Report in the *New York Times* (31 October 1976) discusses charges, from Amnesty International and Catholic sources, of torture, murder and other forms of repression in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia. The context is neither the number and plight of the victims nor the role in the atrocities of the “economic-political-military complex” described by religious leaders in Latin America, but rather the problem of how to cripple “leftist extremism,” an effort which has unfortunately led many military leaders in Latin America to condone repressive practices—though some “called moderate, including General Jorge R. Videla, the President, are described as being committed to protecting human rights” but in the usual formula unable “to control unofficial repression by security agents.” As a correspondent for *Le Monde* observes, “the Argentine military seem, in fact, to have distributed roles: some kill, the others distract the attention of the public with vague promises on the reestablishment of liberty and democracy.”²²⁰ Vague promises and allegations of a threat of “left-wing terrorism” are gratefully received by U.S. media and ideologists, looking eagerly for some basis for legitimizing constructive terror.

An Argentine editor is quoted in the AP report in support of the repression: “Those of us who want democracy are willing to pay any price to get it.” His comment scarcely caricatures the general response among U.S. ideologists in the press and elsewhere. The occasional report in the U.S. press merely underscores its complicity in the spread of the plague of state terror in Latin America. The avoidance of any hint of U.S. responsibility is striking and consistent, and can only be compared with a (hypothetical) refusal to trace the system of Eastern Europe to its source in Moscow.²²¹

A major target of the new Argentinian regime, not surprisingly, is the trade union movement, which has been effectively dismantled, while “according to Argentine labor sources, economic conditions for workers have never been worse,” again, a typical concomitant of constructive terrorism.²²² U.S. business, however, is pleased with the militarized Argentina, which has not only been struggling to pacify the labor force, but has also applied deflationary policies of a draconian nature to arrange price-cost-budget values in accordance with the criteria and interests of the international financial community. The junta leaders have shown great deference to the bankers, meeting with them periodically to explain their policies and seek banker approval, much as if the bankers constituted the board of directors of a corporation called “Argentina.”²²³ The Economics Minister of Argentina, Jose Martinez de Hoz, is a free enterpriser perfectly in tune with the demands

of international business, and a personal friend of David Rockefeller, who addressed a group of bankers in New York at a screening of a promotional film on Argentina, explaining to them why Argentina was a new promised land:

I have the impression that finally Argentina has a regime which understands the private enterprise system... Not since the Second World War has Argentina been presented with a combination of advantageous circumstances as it has now.^{[224](#)}

The scale of state terror in Argentina since the military coup of March, 1976, is difficult to estimate. Jean-Pierre Clerc reports official figures of 8,500 missing, including 4,000 prisoners and presumably 4,500 killed, noting that a figure of 15,000 killed is widely accepted among Argentine journalists.^{[225](#)} According to official reports, many have been killed in “combat,” but Argentine dissidents are skeptical about the nature of this “combat”. The Argentine writer and investigative reporter Rodolfo Walsh circulated an open letter to the junta documenting its crimes in March, 1977, in which he cited official figures from “combat” in 1976: 600 dead and 15 wounded, percentages “unheard of in even the most savage conflicts.” He concluded, not unreasonably, that the “combats” are actually murder operations. He estimated that in the “savage reign of terror” since the coup 15,000 people are missing without trace, 10,000 are political prisoners, and tens of thousands are in exile, while the number of those tortured is unknown. Meanwhile, according to Walsh, real wages have been reduced by 60% in one year and food consumption has dropped by 40%, while “the only beneficiaries of your economic strategy are the old cattle-owning oligarchy, the new oligarchy of speculators, and a select group of international companies such as ITT, Exxon, U.S. Steel, and Siemens,” to which the economics minister and his associates are “directly and personally linked.”^{[226](#)} Walsh was kidnapped the day after his letter appeared and has not been heard from since.

Amnesty International, a year after the coup, estimated that there were between 5,000-6,000 political prisoners and that “torture is widely and routinely practised,” while some 2,000-5,000 people had disappeared without trace. Prisoners have been unofficially executed on the pretense of “attempting to escape.” Many reported to have been killed “in clashes with security forces” were in fact “known to have been abducted or even officially detained.”^{[227](#)}

In a subsequent report, AI estimated that “over 15,000 people have disappeared, and that 8-10,000 people are detained in official prisons” since the March, 1976 coup: “This does not include the secret detention camps where torture, terrible conditions and eventual execution are rampant.” It also noted the sharp increase in violence after the coup and the declining living standards, and cited the definition of a “terrorist” offered by President

Videla: “a terrorist is not just someone with a gun or a bomb, but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to Western and Christian civilizations” (*London Times*, 4 January 1978). The General deserves high marks for honesty, at least.²²⁸

According to the same AI report, torture is carried out in Argentina at some 60 separate detention centers—presumably unbeknownst to the “moderate” head of state General Videla, or regrettably out of his powers of control; or perhaps the torture is moderate, or possibly systematic torture is consistent with moderation (reasonableness) if used for proper ends. So one might assume from the coverage of Argentine terror in the *New York Times*, for example. Men, women, and children have been tortured with the most brutal and sophisticated methods available in the empire. Patricia Erb, the 19-year-old daughter of a U.S. Mennonite Missionary, was abducted in September, 1976, by armed men in civilian clothes, blindfolded, and eventually tortured, but released under foreign pressure. She gave the following account of what she had endured:

The day after my abduction, I was conducted, as were many others, to rooms which we called the ‘torture house.’ There, men dressed in civilian clothes interrogated us, using torture ‘when it was necessary’ in attempts to extract confessions. This torture took various forms: beatings with clubs and fists, kicks, immersion in water or in fecal substance almost to the point of drowning, and the use of la picana (electric prod) which was applied to the most sensitive parts of the body, such as the mouth, eyes, nose, vagina, breast, penis, feet and hands. In order to cause greater pain, they would tie us down to a wire bed which carried an electric current and entangled wire between our fingers and toes, splashing water on us in order to increase the pain. These methods were aimed at forcing confessions of alleged activities, which in many cases were inventions of the military. Sometimes these methods were used merely as punishment.

After these interrogations we were taken again to the ‘barn,’ where the rest of the prisoners were being held. They, in turn, were conducted to the interrogation rooms while the rest of us could hear their screaming and howling. They came back almost unconscious and moaning in great pain. Sometimes doctors would come and look after the worst injuries, such as broken bones, bleeding kidneys, etc. I am very sorry I can’t remember the names of all the prisoners who were there with me. When I knew of the possibility of being freed, because of my nationality, I tried to memorize as many names as I could.²²⁹

The Argentine regime uses all the familiar devices of modern totalitarianism to improve its international image. In the *New Statesman* (6 October 1978), Christopher Hitchens describes the case of Jaime Dri, a member of the Argentine Parliament until 1976, who was arrested in 1977 and “locked up in the *Escuela Mecanica de Armada*, a naval centre much used for the practice of torture upon political prisoners, (one of Argentina’s few growth industries).” Dri was given the number 49, and was told that “he was the fifth person to have the number 49, which gives you some idea of the total involved.” In April, 1978, he and other prisoners were moved elsewhere and there was a flurry of activity as the *Escuela* was painted and decorated, “trustees were dressed up in naval uniform,” etc. “Dri, together with other top-security prisoners, was stuffed into a back room where he found himself sitting on a pile of electric torture devices. Afterwards

a warden told them that this was all in aid of a gullible British journalist who was being 'shown round'. When Dri got out, and told this story, he didn't know that a few weeks later a laudatory piece about the *Escuela* had appeared in what is sometimes called a respected British newspaper." In short, the technique that had long been used by the Soviet Union to dupe sympathetic visitors from abroad.

With Argentina in the news after its victory in the world soccer matches that it hosted, the *New York Times* again accorded it a column by Juan de Onis.²³⁰ "Argentina and its military government are facing problems that are more complex" than winning soccer matches, he observes. One of their problems is that while they have "an excess of force," they have no "political course other than repression." "This repression has made human rights another major problem." The problem was caused by "a rampant subversive movement," now destroyed "with at least 3,000 killed in five years of conflict" and 3,500 security prisoners in jails, in addition to 1,600 missing (compare Amnesty's estimate). As is characteristic of this kind of journalism, de Onis does not inquire into the origins of the "rampant subversive movement" that bears the ultimate responsibility, in his account, for the human rights problem. According to the historian Alain Rouquié, author of a massive study of military power and politics in Argentina, "the launching of the guerrilla movement properly speaking was provoked by the military coup of 1966," and its deeper origins are to be found in long-term social and economic injustice (interview with Jean-Pierre Clerc, *Le Monde*, 15 September 1978). But questions of this nature are generally foreign to the political analysis that dominates the U.S. media, just as little is said about the social and economic content of the military terror that exploits a "terrorist threat" as justification for imposing the economic programs of client subfascism. The military leaders, de Onis writes, "are well aware that this country's international reputation would improve if these prisoners were either tried or released," but the memory of terrorist acts by "the extremists is too recent" for the military to move in this direction. The economic situation has improved under the military regime, though workers' wages are at "the lowest level of purchasing power since 1970" (compare Boggs and McLellan, note 222). Another problem is that the United States might cut off military supplies and perhaps economic aid through international banks might be jeopardized. One must feel a twinge of sympathy for the problems faced by Argentina's military leaders.

The U.S. has cut military aid to Argentina and blocked some commercial transactions, on grounds of human rights violations. But funding from international lending institutions has increased since the coup, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, in all of which the United States plays a major

role; and private banks, mostly American, have undertaken extensive loans now that Argentina is more “credit worthy” with its new economic policies.²³¹ Most of the responsibility for the cuts in government aid is attributable to congressional pressure and legislation, over the protests of the Carter administration. The administration has striven mightily to maintain the friendly relationships with the Argentine junta, with Secretary of State Vance making a special trip to Buenos Aires and with strenuous efforts devoted to preserving some flow of both “security assistance” and military training aid. The Pentagon, in the words of one high-ranking officer, is trying “to maintain the special relationship we have with the Argentine Armed Forces.”²³² In short, an enormous efflorescence of subfascist torture and murder is capable of causing a liberal administration claiming devotion to human rights reluctantly to apply a small rap on its client’s knuckles, while continuing quietly to facilitate a large expansion in its borrowings and assuring it of a continued supportive and special relationship.

The Argentine catastrophe mirrors the recent history of Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.²³³ On Brazil, see above, chapter 2, section 1.1.5. U.S. involvement in the Chile coup, with its murderous and destructive aftermath, is too-well known to require discussion here.²³⁴ As for Uruguay, Amnesty International concludes that “the scale and intensity of repression in Uruguay is probably the highest in Latin America.”²³⁵ Joe Eldredge, a former missionary who now heads the Washington Office on Latin America (sponsored by a coalition of religious and academic groups), writes that “with nearly one out of every 500 persons in jail or in concentration camps, Uruguay holds the dubious distinction of having, on a per capita basis, the highest number of political prisoners in the world,” and he gives the rather common estimate that one-fourth of the population has fled.²³⁶ The *Times* story on the AI report cited above (31 October 1976) summarizes the situation in Uruguay as follows:

In Uruguay 12 to 25 people are estimated to have been tortured to death since 1972, when the Tupamaro urban guerrillas began to decline. One out of 500 of Uruguay’s three million people is said to be either a political prisoner or a refugee.

In fact, in an AI news conference in New York on February 19, 1976, 24 “known deaths by torture” were announced (see note 235). The “one out of 500” figure is, no doubt, an error, referring just to political prisoners; the number of refugees is far higher. The *Times* report is typical in its vague reference to the unexplained “decline” of the Tupamaros, not to speak of their equally mysterious prior rise.²³⁷ In a later report, *Times* Latin American correspondent Juan de Onis observes (29 June 1978) that Uruguay “was convulsed by a left-wing terrorist movement, called the Tupamaros,” which was as violent

as the Italian Red Brigades and even killed a U.S. police advisor, Dan Mitrione, in 1970, evoking a right wing reaction. The reason for the original “convulsion” is beyond inquiry.²³⁸ One would not know from de Onis’s account that there was a social and historical background for the emergence of the Tupamaros, or that Dan Mitrione was the chief adviser to police who were found by Uruguayan senators to be “systematically torturing suspected Tupamaros” (Langguth, p. 249), among other atrocities. De Onis reports that “tens of thousands of people have left Uruguay”²³⁹ and that the United States has suspended military assistance and reduced economic aid; the indirect channels of U.S. aid are not mentioned. He cites a military officer, explaining the view of the current leadership: “We take pride in being the guiding light in the struggle of our Western Christian civilization against international Marxist sedition.”

A great deal of information about Uruguay can be found in material that is not destined to reach the U.S. press; for example, from Uruguayan Senator Zelmar Michelini, who was kidnapped with another Uruguayan political figure in Argentina shortly after the March, 1976 coup and later found shot to death, apparently tortured.²⁴⁰ Senator Michelini testified on Uruguayan repression before the Russell Tribunal in Rome in April, 1974.²⁴¹ He estimated the number of Uruguayans tortured at “more than 5,000,” while over 40,000 people had been held as political prisoners. Accompanying testimony by victims recounts many cases. Michelini pointed out that comparative figures for the U.S. would be about 3,200,000 political prisoners and 400,000 torture victims. Citing Michelini’s estimates, the noted Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano adds that in an unpopulated and fertile land with a low birth rate, one fourth of the population is in exile, one part of the flight of the persecuted in Latin America which, as we have already remarked, bears comparison to the Nazi period in Europe.²⁴²

Though the *New York Times* reports on Uruguay make no note of the fact, the systematic and sophisticated use of torture in Uruguay, as elsewhere, seems to have developed as one central component of the U.S. aid program. Victims have reported that Dan Mitrione, who was involved in the escalation of torture in Uruguay, participated directly in torture sessions.²⁴³ There is little doubt that local torturers were trained by the United States and use equipment supplied through the U.S. assistance program with the knowledge of their U.S. advisors, who are also responsible for coordinating the operations of police terrorists in Latin America. Summarizing his investigation of U.S. police operations in Latin America, Langguth writes:

...the main exporter of cold-war ideas, the principal source of the belief that dissent must be crushed by every means and any means, has been the United States. Our indoctrination of foreign troops provided a justification

for torture in the jail cells of Latin America. First in the Inter-American Police Academy in Panama, then at the more ambitious International Police Academy in Washington, foreign policemen were taught that in the war against international communism they were “the first line of defense.”...the U.S. training turned already conservative men into political reactionaries.²⁴⁴

The torture is no big deal: “A former U.S. police adviser I ran across in Latin America,” Langguth remarks, “assured me that some prisoners did not feel pain.” After the students have graduated and are ready to work, they can still benefit from the assistance of U.S. advisors and international coordination that becomes useful when, for example, Uruguayan dissidents are to be assassinated by “death squads” that operate with impunity in Argentina.

The students and their teachers may believe that their task is to stand as a bulwark against “international communism,” but at a higher level of planning it is no doubt well understood that the torturers are the first line of defense against the erosion of the privileges of the owners and managers of the advanced industrial societies. The victims have few illusions, as has already been noted. See the “Open Letter to North American Christians,” (p. 285). Galeano writes:

The military in power in Uruguay, who are now a scandal for the U.S., were good students of the Pentagon course in the Panama Canal Zone. There they learned the techniques of repression and the art of governing; it is with American arms and advisors that they have set in motion the gearing up of crime and torture. The dictatorship has destroyed the unions and political parties, closed the newspapers and reviews, forbidden books and songs in the name of an “*ideology of national security*,” which, in clear language, means “*ideology for the security of foreign investment*.” Liberty for business, liberty for prices, liberty for trade: one throws the people in prison so that business will remain free.

On the same day that President Carter announced the end of military aid, Galeano notes, “the World Bank, controlled by the U.S., announced a new credit of \$30 million for Uruguay, added to the \$55 million granted in 1976.” The International Monetary Fund, he reports, is now the principal creditor of the country and directs its political economy so as to reduce popular consumption, lower wages, and stimulate exports: “The machine has its laws.” It is only in the United States that mention of such truisms is considered indecent, if they are even understood by journalists and political analysts.

The U.S. contribution to civilizing South America is of fairly recent vintage. Central America has a longer history as a beneficiary of U.S. humanitarianism, and its ongoing constructive bloodbaths may therefore serve as a still more revealing indication of the systematic and long-term nature of U.S. policy within the domains of its influence and control.

Consider Guatemala, which, Joe Eldredge writes, “must have been the leader in all Latin America in terms of ruthless repression of large segments of the population” in the

1970s, and where “the slaughter continues.”²⁴⁵ A mild reformist government that threatened the prerogatives of the United Fruit Company was overthrown by a CIA-backed coup in 1954, terminating efforts at desperately-needed agrarian reform, decimating the labor movement (reduced from 100,000 to 27,000; more than 200 union leaders were killed immediately after the coup) and setting off waves of right-wing violence that have claimed thousands of lives, many during a U.S.-sponsored counterinsurgency campaign in the mid-1960s. The 1954 coup, like others (cf. note 1, chapter 2), was regarded as a great success in the U.S., and some key facts have long been concealed by the press, which much preferred fantasies about a “Communist takeover” blocked by the Guatemalan people. The basic doctrine was laid down in a Senate Resolution of June 25, 1954, which found “strong evidence of intervention by the international Communist movement in the State of Guatemala, whereby government institutions have been infiltrated by Communist agents, weapons of war have been secretly shipped into that country, and the pattern of Communist conquest has become manifest”—essentially the charges levelled against Czechoslovakia, *mutatis mutandis*, by the Warsaw Pact nations in 1968.²⁴⁶ Under-Secretary of State Spruille Braden, a member of a family with large Latin American mining interests, a consultant to United Fruit, and the leader of a Council on Foreign Relations study group on Latin America, explained the basic principle in more general terms in March, 1953:

Because Communism is so blatantly an international and not an internal affair, its suppression, even by force, in an American country, by one or more of the other republics, would not constitute an intervention in the internal affairs of the former.²⁴⁷

Rather, such suppression would be an example of defense against “internal aggression,” as later explained by Adlai Stevenson and others.²⁴⁸

Having been saved from “Communism” and restored to its position as a “showplace for democracy,” Guatemala has loyally undertaken its proper role, effectively providing agricultural assistance to the United States while its people die of malnutrition and even sending large quantities of blood to the developed world, contributed by people with the greatest nutritional deficiencies, who have no other way to survive.²⁴⁹ With the brutal disruption of the efforts at rural organization that were carried out during the reform period of 1944-54, the peasant population has been reduced to the conditions of penury and serfdom that formerly prevailed, though now, in keeping with the forms of a “modernizing” society, the earlier feudal techniques have been replaced. But as Roger Plant explains:

Illegal methods of persuasion still have to be used—thus the growing number of contractors today—but the growing highland population, increased land parcelisation, and above all the appallingly inegalitarian land

distribution and agrarian policies of the government have ensured that poverty and starvation provide a cheap labour force for the estates more successfully than did the legislation and brute force of the colonial and nineteenth-century periods.²⁵⁰

These factors do not enter into the “Human Rights” calculations of the United States. Thus the State Department Human Rights Reports note the problem posed for the Guatemalan government by the violence of the “Guerrilla Army of the Poor,” explaining that “much of Guatemala’s long history of violence is the result of bitter personal feuds, rural banditry, and smuggling”—nothing more (1977). The 1978 Report adds that the government is moving ahead with reform measures to alleviate rural poverty but does not regard the condition of virtual slavery resulting from the U.S.-backed coup of 1954 as a human rights problem. By the standards of Freedom House, Guatemala is “partly free.” The 1978 Human Rights Report observes that “for the past two decades Guatemalan politics have been dominated by the military within a constitutional framework providing for regular elections and civilian control below the top level,” but it is silent on the events that took place two decades ago or their impact on the peasantry, the vast majority of the population. For them, unofficial observers report that life “is still akin to that of the pre-1944 or even colonial days” with “the most spectacular inequality and injustice to be found anywhere in the world.”²⁵¹

The State Department is not alone in coyly evading the events of 1954 in Guatemala. Stephen Schlesinger points out in *The Nation* (28 October 1978) that “what strikes an observer immediately about the Guatemala affair is how history has over the years practically abandoned it. No book has ever explored it; no Senate committee has ever investigated it.” The oversight is not accidental, but is rather part of a systematic pattern of avoiding topics that might provide some insight into U.S. foreign policy, thus eroding the image of benevolence tainted with occasional “tragic error.” Documents obtained by Schlesinger under the Freedom of Information Act demonstrate why historians and journalists are wise to keep U.S. relations with Guatemala under wraps. The documents show that far from being an exile operation carried out with the connivance of the CIA, “the [1954] *Putsch* was conceived of and run at the highest levels of the American Government in closest cahoots with the United Fruit Company and under the overall direction of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, backed by President Eisenhower.”

U.S. concern over developments in Guatemala began shortly after the institution of democratic government in 1944. “Under the new regime,” Schlesinger writes, “the Guatemalan Congress approved a mild labor code which forced United Fruit, among other employers, to improve the wretched working conditions of its peasants. While the code

was being debated, the State Department began to dispatch warnings to the Guatemalan President at the behest of United Fruit.” When the code was nevertheless passed, the United States began to pressure the Guatemalan government to eliminate “Communist sympathizers.” Under Eisenhower, the State Department and the CIA were in the hands of the Dulles brothers, who had close links to major corporations and had no difficulty persuading Eisenhower “to press a secret war against Guatemala” when the reform democratic government threatened to expropriate unused land belonging to United Fruit, then the country’s principal landowner. A State Department intelligence estimate of June 1953, written shortly after the expropriation of United Fruit land, proposed that the U.S. should arm the tyrannies in the vicinity of Guatemala, a signal to the Guatemalan military to get rid of President Arbenz. The U.S. Information Service (USIS) planted articles in Latin American newspapers “labeling certain Guatemalan officials as Communists” (according to the then acting director of USIS). By December 1953 U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy was suggesting a variety of familiar means “to make more difficult continuation of [Arbenz] regime in Guatemala.” Efforts undertaken by the United States did not succeed. The conflict became public when Guatemala, unable to purchase arms from the United States, had a shipment sent from Czechoslovakia on a Swedish ship. The U.S. government leaked the discovery to the press, flew arms to Nicaragua, and secretly dispatched naval vessels to search “suspicious” ships bound for Guatemala, an act of gangsterism that led to internal protest by Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy who wrote in a memo to Dulles that it “should give stir to the bones of Admiral von Tirpitz” and other Nazi naval officers.

Meanwhile, the United States was carrying out a double-edged program: arming rebels waiting in Honduras and Nicaragua to invade Guatemala and disseminating anti-Guatemalan propaganda, with the aid of sympathetic journalists. United Fruit and other U.S. companies were kept advised of U.S. plans. When the CIA-backed “incursion” took place on June 18, 1954, U.S. muscle was employed at the UN to prevent France and Britain from accepting a Soviet proposal to dispatch a UN peace-keeping force. After the *Putsch*, Dulles wired Ambassador Peurifoy to arrange talks between the new regime and United Fruit and to have our man Castillo Armas, now in control, begin a round-up of “Communists,” initiating the constructive bloodbath that has been underway ever since, with regular United States initiatives when required.

Dulles also tried to convince Castillo to deny the traditional right of asylum and require that “asylees” who could not be charged with crimes on some pretext be denied safe conduct unless they agreed to go to Russia or, if “considered relatively harmless,” to

remote countries. This was too much even for the U.S. subfascist client, who decided to honor the right of asylum, though he did proceed “to persecute hundreds of Guatemalans for all sorts of vague ‘Communist’ crimes” and “rescinded the Agrarian Reform laws, handed back all of United Fruit’s seized land, and generally set up a reliable, ruthless authoritarian regime in which the United States could put its trust” (Schlesinger).

Much of what Schlesinger reports was known to those who choose to know. The evidence of plotting at the highest level and of direct contacts with United Fruit is new, and reveals, as does other commonly ignored documentation (e.g., the Pentagon Papers) that the various expressions of the systematic U.S. program of global counterrevolutionary intervention are not attributable, as liberal doctrine would have it, to an intelligence system that has somehow gotten out of hand (the “rogue elephant” hypothesis), but rather to deep-seated factors rooted in the domestic power structure, governmental and extra-governmental.

Sometimes it is recognized that the U.S. has made certain “errors” in Guatemala. For example, a staff memorandum prepared for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by Pat M. Holt describes the “fundamental problems” of Guatemala which have become more difficult to deal with since the U.S. “got into the bear trap by intervening to frustrate a process of social change,” though “the problems were, indeed, on the way to some kind of solution when the United States stepped in to restore a semblance of the status quo ante.” Since the United States intervened, “most (not all) observers affirm that the rich have gotten richer and the poor both poorer and more numerous,” and the United States has become “politically identified with police terrorism” because, unaccountably, the U.S. police training program has somehow failed—“the teaching hasn’t been absorbed” (another theory comes to mind). Meanwhile U.S. aid continues, evidence “of the wisdom of the adage that it’s easier to get into a bear trap than to get out of it.”²⁵² How painful are the burdens of international benefactors.

Nothing is said in the staff memorandum concerning the activities of U.S. corporations, which approximately doubled their direct investment in Guatemala in the 1960s, and have apparently found the new Guatemala good; for example, the International Nickel Company, which in partnership with the Hanna Mining Company (both largely U.S. owned) is preparing to exploit what appears to be one of the world’s richest deposits of nickel.

Amnesty International published a report on Guatemala in December, 1976, estimating “the victims of covertly-sanctioned murders or disappearances...to number over 20,000”

since 1966. “The vast majority of the ‘disappeared,’ when located, are found to have been the victims of violent death.” Many were found “with signs of torture or mutilation along roadsides or in ravines, floating in plastic bags in lakes or rivers, or buried in mass graves in the countryside.”²⁵³

The year 1966 marked “the beginnings of official ‘counter-terror.’” AI cites a report in *Time* magazine (26 January 1968) where Colonel John Webber, U.S. military attaché during one of the campaigns (later assassinated by guerrillas), reportedly acknowledged that “it was his idea and at his instigation that the technique of counter-terror had been implemented by the Guatemalan Army in the Izabal areas.”²⁵⁴ In May, 1968 the Southern Command Forces of the United States conducted joint “training exercises” with Nicaraguan and Guatemalan armies in the Department of Izabal, officially designated as “Operation Hawk.” U.S. Embassy officials in Guatemala claimed that the steady flow of military visitors from the United States was merely “routine,” and according to Thomas and Marjorie Melville: “They also state that all the Guatemalan officials trained in Fort Gulick, all the special police hired with Alliance for Progress funds (3,500 in 1967 and 1968), and the ‘model police programmes’ developed by AID consultant Peter Costello and implemented with AID money, are no more than what is done by ‘similar U.S. missions in various Latin American countries,’”²⁵⁵ which is no doubt true.

The victims of “counter-terror” are primarily from the peasantry or urban poor, AI believes, but include as well petty criminals, members and leaders of opposition parties, trade unionists and journalists, students and teachers, leaders of peasant cooperatives, occasionally businessmen or functionaries. Reports of 149 murders of members of security forces and others are also cited. Evidence of torture is “almost exclusively limited to reports of the physical condition of corpses of ‘disappeared’ persons when discovered.”²⁵⁶ The Senate staff memorandum cited above (note 252) claims that the reason why “the corpses of alleged guerrillas are being found on roadsides instead of the bodies of live guerrillas being produced in court” is that the judiciary is intimidated by guerrillas. The Amnesty Report points out, however, that “the massive use of extrajudicial execution continued unchecked and actually widened following the virtual elimination of the organized guerrillas by 1968.” The guerrilla movement itself evidently developed in response to the situation brought about by the 1954 coup.

More recent AI reports allege that political murder and “disappearances” continue. In February, 1978 a list of 113 cases was released covering the last quarter of 1977. There was “considerable evidence,” AI reported, “that the highest levels of government tacitly

condoned the continuing abductions and murders, especially of peasant farmers and of the urban poor.”²⁵⁷

The AI reports have been covered in the U.S. press; the December, 1976 document is reported in the *New York Times* (12 December 1976), and the 1978 update merited 12 lines on p. 14 (23 February 1978). It was mentioned again in a story on the presidential elections (Alan Riding, 9 March 1978), which reported that “most Guatemalans seem surprisingly indifferent about the outcome.” The surprise is perhaps mitigated by the discovery that the previous election was marked by “blatant electoral fraud...to insure General Laugerud’s victory over a popular left-leaning candidate” and that “there were no leftist or reformist candidates for the presidency.”

The number of Guatemalans murdered since 1966 is approximately equal to the 22,000 killed by the earthquake of February 4, 1976, when, in Guatemala City, “the poorest areas were destroyed, while the wealthy neighborhoods were almost unscathed.”²⁵⁸ The deaths are not simply attributable to the wrath of God. Dr. Gordon Bateman, an American surgeon who worked with victims, observed that “we simply don’t have these kinds of medical conditions in the United States—this is another world.” James P. Sterba, reporting his observations, comments that in Guatemala, “the normal conditions of ill health and inadequate shelter left the victims particularly vulnerable after their injuries.” Many victims died because of lack of transportation facilities or simply lack of food: “many people here cannot afford to buy more than a day’s supply of food at one time” and village markets often have only a day’s supply because of lack of refrigeration or packaging. Even clean running water is a luxury to the majority of Guatemalans. Sterba notes that many Americans, who were shocked by the effects of the earthquake, “would have been equally shocked by the human scene here had the earthquake never occurred.”²⁵⁹ One wonders how many of the earthquake victims might have been saved, had the United States not entered into the “bear trap” in 1954, aborting desperately needed reforms then in progress. This question is not raised in the *New York Times* reports.

Jonathan Dimbleby took up the forbidden theme, however, in the *New Statesman*. “It was the poor, whose houses were too weak to withstand the shock, who died in the earthquake,” he comments. He then recounts the effects of the U.S. subversion of 1954: more than 50,000 children die from malnutrition every year “in a country which could easily feed not only its own population, but the people of at least two neighbouring countries—if only the army and the Americans had permitted the reforms to go ahead”; “starvation wages” and “squalor that should cause a world outcry”; “a nicely balanced

combination of mass poverty and mass murder” while Guatemala’s oligarchy and Western businessmen are enriched; U.S.-guided pacification programs with thousands of victims; “30,000 peasant graves [that] bear witness” to the truth expressed by the men of the death squads: “if you ‘wish to remain alive and well’ you should abandon your ‘communist sympathies.’” The Indians, nearly 70% of the population, are “treated as though they belonged to another species; were it not for the fact that oppressor and oppressed cannot be distinguished by colour, Guatemala would enjoy the same international obloquy heaped on Rhodesia and South Africa. Yet, no one, least of all the United States, breathes a word.”²⁶⁰ Which is not to suggest that many words have been breathed in respectable circles with regard to Southern Africa, except in response to pressures arising out of (mainly) black concern, agitation, and threats at home and in Africa.

To the tens of thousands murdered and the many hundreds of thousands who simply die of malnutrition, disease and catastrophe in this constructive bloodbath, we may add the victims of agribusiness. Cotton yields in Guatemala “are the highest in the Western hemisphere and vast profits are made every year,” in part because “the level of pesticide spraying is the highest in the world and little concern is shown for the people who live near the cotton fields,” a permanent population of about 370,000 supplemented with some 600,000 Indian seasonal workers. The level of DDT in mothers’ milk in Guatemala is the highest in the Western world, up to 185 times higher than the safe limit, according to one study. Some new pesticides used “are five times more lethal to humans than DDT.” Meat rejected for shipment to the U.S. because of high DDT content is reportedly sold locally or in the Caribbean islands. “Because the victims of the spraying have little voice in Guatemalan politics, the use of pesticides is rarely discussed in the capital and so far the issue has not been raised in the campaign for the presidential elections next March”—perhaps another reason for the “surprising” apathy noted later by the same correspondent.²⁶¹

As we write, the massacre continues. On May 29, 1978, Catholic Church workers reported 114 peasants killed by the army in an Indian village when Indians attempted to present a petition protesting the takeover of their land by wealthy landowners who have made them squatters. The Indians work “in serflike conditions on huge estates” or on tiny patches of land. Eighty percent of their children under five suffer from malnutrition, according to government statistics. State Department officials say privately that there are 25 to 30 unexplained political deaths every month, perpetrated by “people in the intimidation business who are officially tolerated.”²⁶²

Amnesty International investigated the May 29 massacre, reporting that more than ten weeks later the wounded were still in army custody. It notes that details of the events of May 29 are confused, and cites sources that “state that the army ordered evacuation of houses around the temporary garrison [of troops that arrived three days before the planned demonstration against threatened eviction], warning the occupants of gunfire, and that present with the troops were landowners who had been in dispute with the Indians.” AI has the names of 51 of the dead (the government reported 35 killed after “leftwing agitators incited more than 800 Indians to attack the troops and demand the forcible takeover of private farms”). A Guatemalan commission of inquiry including trade unionists and opposition groups reported that “within hours of the demonstration the army buried 68 people (including nine women and 10 children) in a mass grave at Panzos and that 46 seriously wounded people who died later were buried in a second mass grave” (including 10 women and eight children). AI goes on to report that killings, abductions and disappearances in this region have “increased dramatically during the past three years” and that these abuses “have coincided with the development of the petroleum and mineral resources of the region.” Indians who have refused to evacuate the lands they have traditionally farmed, now coveted by non-Indian landholders attracted by the rise in property values and increased economic activities, “have frequently suffered the extra-legal violence of para-military death squads.” The May 29 incident was “unusual in its nature, its scale, and in that official spokesmen sought to justify the killings.” The usual pattern is “abduction, torture and murder of individual leaders...or single important families,” or burning of huts and crops, which the Indians attribute to “Guatemalan army troops working at the behest of local large landholders.”^{[263](#)}

Nicaragua has been another traditional “bear trap” for the United States; for well over 100 years, in this case. In July, 1854 “San Juan del Norte (Greytown) was destroyed to avenge an insult to the American Minister to Nicaragua.”^{[264](#)} From 1926-1933 U.S. marines fought a counterinsurgency operation that led to the takeover by the Somoza family, which has since ruled Nicaragua as its private fiefdom. But they are not the only beneficiaries of over a century of intervention. A two-page advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* (31 May 1977), is headed “Nicaragua: An Investor’s Dream Come True.” The subheadings give the flavor: “American Chamber of Commerce Invites Investment in Nicaragua,” “A Country Where Foreign Capital Is Nurtured; ‘Yanquis’ Feel at Home,” “A Good Export Base,” “Industrial Parks,” “Great Opportunities,” etc. Here the U.S. investor will find “a good investment climate,” “stability, peace and a prospering economy,” and will even be provided by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce with “a comprehensive guide

for setting up business in Nicaragua, to share its experiences with others and to explain this country's policies and practices in support of the Free Enterprise System." The U.S. Department of Commerce predicted that "Nicaragua will continue to enjoy political stability and a bright economic future," the report continues. There is absolute assurance of freedom of remittance on profits and capital, and no capital gains or dividend tax, as well as other incentives. There is also "low-cost abundant labor" which "takes pride in its task," with no compulsory union affiliation. Nicaraguans even like baseball. In short, a very *simpatico* country, "with a long tradition of cooperation and good feeling towards the people of the United States."

The vitality of the country was shown after the earthquake that took 30,000 lives and wiped out the capital city. "But immediately its dynamic young President, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, leaped into the ruins, worked alongside the 2.2 million Nicaraguans, and built a new economy—healthier and stronger than ever before." Somoza "believes in the Free Enterprise System," and needless to say, runs "a full-time program of improvements in the quality of life of the agriculturalist" and maintains "a calm, secure political climate" with "free elections."

A year later, the calm, secure political climate had reached the point where the *New York Times Magazine* featured an article entitled "National Mutiny in Nicaragua," describing how "almost every sector of the country—radicals and conservatives, rich and poor—is rising up against a dynastic dictatorship that can no longer count on the support of the United States" (a fact not uncorrelated with the disaffection among wealthy businessmen, who are so "dismayed by what [their spokesman considers] the brutality and corruption of General Somoza's dictatorship" that they conducted a two-week work stoppage to try to force his resignation, and this having failed, formed an Opposition Front that includes the guerrillas aimed at the overthrow of General Somoza).²⁶⁵

One reason for what Riding describes as "the 'betrayal' of the Somoza family by two of its oldest allies—the wealthy business elite and the United States Government," is the fantastic corruption. A case in point was the behavior of the dynamic young president who "leaped into the ruins" to build a new economy after the Managua earthquake. In fact, relief supplies were stolen by Somoza's cronies and the National Guardsmen who constitute his "private army." But "while scandalous, the looting of emergency supplies was modest compared to the way the Somoza family and its associates seized 'reconstruction' as an opportunity for further enrichment," relocating the "new" Managua on some land that happened to belong to—or was quickly bought up by—the Somoza

family. Using foreign assistance to develop needed facilities, the family was able to make quite a killing as land prices skyrocketed. It is the “unfair competition” by these masters of corruption that has “most upset Nicaragua’s private sector,” Riding reports. For a long time the Somozas have allowed their own and affiliated companies to import foreign goods duty free, enabling them to underprice their business competition, obliged to pay import taxes.²⁶⁶

As for the happy peasants and workers of the *Wall Street Journal* advertisement, Riding writes that “economic injustice seemed institutionalized” with a per capita income of \$130 a year in the countryside; “Malnutrition was endemic throughout the country, infant mortality was high, and half of the adults were illiterate.”²⁶⁷ John Huey, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, says that “A recent walk through a barrio in the colonial city of Leon—before it erupted into full-scale guerrilla warfare—reveals a degree of poverty and desperation that is startling, even by Latin American standards.”²⁶⁸

But in the violence of 1978 the poor were not standing alone against Somoza, as national guardsmen “clubbed middle-class women in the streets during the recent national strike, and guerrillas swooped down from the mountains to attack the guardsmen.”²⁶⁹ It is “the all-out entry of the country’s elite, private business leadership—largely educated at prestigious U.S. universities—into the struggle to depose him” that is most “troubling to Gen. Somoza,” and to the U.S. elite that put him into power and has always supported him through these decades of atrocity and corruption. This “archetypal banana republic dictatorship,” Huey writes, is likely to succumb to “the capitalists—fed up with corruption and abuse of power” rather than the “Communists” whom the regime blames for its troubles. True, Somoza still has plenty of muscle. He is supported by “the extremely loyal national guard,” the sole army or police force, which “still is trained by the U.S. in the Panama Canal Zone.” And as probably “Central America’s wealthiest man” he might be able to make good his boast that “if I gave away my title and gave away my political connections, I’d still be the strongest man in the country.” But many believe his days as U.S. agent in Nicaragua are numbered. “Leading opposition strategists are maintaining close contact with the Carter Administration,” which is as much disturbed as are local businessmen by the unbelievable corruption which is blamed “for stifling foreign investment, despite a laissez-faire legal structure that should draw outside capital like flies to honey.”

Another pillar of support for Somoza, the Roman Catholic Church, has also begun “pressuring the regime in earnest,” Huey adds. The reason, in this case, includes “charges

of murder and torture of priests and peasants believed to be collaborators” of the guerrillas—charges that the priests, who live with the peasants, know to be true, and know to extend far beyond “collaborators.”

These “charges” have been discussed elsewhere. “According to church sources, hundreds of peasants have been executed or have simply disappeared in the provinces of Matagalpa and Zelaya, since the government stepped up its offensive against leftist guerrillas in the region two years ago. The sources said that many others had been tortured or raped and that their homes had been burned and their crops and property stolen by government troops.”²⁷⁰ Riding notes that Nicaragua was assigned \$2.5 million in military sales credits for 1977 (but see note 288) and that the United States continues to maintain an 11-member military assistance group in Managua to advise the U.S.-trained Nicaraguan forces. Church sources also report mass executions and bombing of hamlets by National Guard aircraft, “a reign of terror in the region,” in a message read from many pulpits throughout the country though excluded from the censored local press.²⁷¹ The same sources report that helicopters bring in bodies after mass killings for burial in mass graves, after which the land of the victims is divided up among “police judges,” and also widespread torture. “Because of the repression, many cottages and hamlets in the area are now empty, their occupants having fled or been killed.”

More detailed discussion of these atrocities appears elsewhere.²⁷² Kinzer, who points out that “Nicaragua is the only country which sends the entire annual graduating class of its military academy for a full year of training” at the U.S. Army School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone, reports that there have been “thousands of deaths in the countryside, where whole villages suspected of harboring guerrillas were destroyed” with “aerial bombings, summary executions and gruesome tortures.” Many believe “that an ongoing American-backed ‘peasant welfare’ program is actually a cover for anti-guerrilla activities.” Reporting from the scene of some of these anti-guerrilla campaigns, Lernoux describes “the awful consequences of U.S. intervention, in the freshly dug graves of peasant families that form a macabre chain across the northern rainforests of Zelaya and the neighboring departments...There is hardly a family in this terror-stricken region that has not suffered from a brutal campaign supported by the U.S. Government to destroy a band of leftwing guerrillas” estimated at about 50 in number. The guerrillas, largely middle and upper class in origin, have never enjoyed significant peasant support, she writes, though “the Nicaraguan military has wiped out whole districts on the convenient pretext of guerrilla collaboration.” “Many of the massacres are the result of the National

Guard's greed for the spoils of war, including land, cattle and women," extending the gradual dispossession of peasants by wealthy ranchers and others. The pastoral letter that described the peasant massacre also spoke of "the increasing concentration of land and wealth at the expense of humble peasants who have been dispossessed of their fields." Lernoux alleges that some 25,000 people have been killed in the 41-year reign of terror aided and abetted by Washington, now reaching a crescendo of violence.

Catholic priests speak of the "tremendous cynicism" in State Department rebuttals of criticism of the Somoza regime. Lernoux's own on-the-spot investigations reveal that U.S. military and economic aid programs are hardly more than a device for killing peasants, destroying community structures, providing data banks on the local population for the National Guard, establishing schools run by military informers, and so on.

The "long purgatory" has continued under U.S. auspices because the Somozas have been careful to acknowledge U.S. hegemony and their own dependent status and "special relationship," and to create the paradise for foreign investment described in the *Wall Street Journal* advertisement. It may now come to an end because the looting by Somoza and his cronies has reached proportions that have alienated most of the local elite and threatened foreign investment opportunities. If the history of the region is any guide, replacement of Somoza's purgatory by a "moderate" regime will simply reinstitute similar practices more effectively. Recall the history of the Dominican Republic, where a similar scene was enacted in 1961.^{[273](#)}

The Nicaraguan bloodbath, in short, is in the process of transition from "constructive terror" to merely desultory and destabilizing bloodshed. The U.S. media have naturally been in a state of some confusion regarding Nicaraguan conditions. This is illustrated by two paired news stories in the *Washington Post*.^{[274](#)} In the first, Goshko and DeYoung point out that Nicaragua

has become a proving ground where the Carter administration is under a trial-and-error test of its ability to translate a concern for human rights into an effective instrument of U.S. foreign policy... Since Central America is a collection of client states heavily dependent on U.S. trade and aid, it would seem to be the perfect laboratory for the successful use of these tactics. But, as Washington has been finding out, what looks logical when spelled out in a position paper isn't really that easy in practice. That was vividly underscored last month by a pair of State Department decisions involving Nicaragua—decisions so outwardly confusing and contradictory that they seem to border on the bizarre. First, the Administration decided to move ahead with approval of a military-assistance agreement whose practical effects would be to strengthen the forces holding the reins of dictatorship in Nicaragua. Then it turned around and withheld a sizable chunk of nonmilitary aid whose purpose was to help ease the poverty in Nicaragua... In this instance... even the most astute State Department watchers were left bewildered about what had happened.

They proceed with an elaborate analysis of bureaucracy, inefficiency, etc. in an effort to unravel this grave mystery.

The mystery and bewilderment rest on the assumption that the U.S. aid program is intended to serve a humanitarian function in the world of subfascism, a fallacy obvious enough to the illiterate and uneducated Nicaraguan peasants, as we discover in DeYoung's accompanying story datelined Chinandega, Nicaragua.

DeYoung describes a group of families who "live in huts made, literally, of rubbish" in an empty railroad yard. ("Atop a heap of old paper bags and plastic, a pregnant woman lay quietly moaning with pain from an evil-looking abscess on her leg" while" a small, mud-covered child sat in the dirt beside her, its head shiny with bald patches caused by malnutrition and disease," etc.) These peasants had been evicted along with dozens of other families by the Nicaraguan National Guard from their seaside village 50 miles away. "The peasants, and their sympathizers here and abroad, have protested their treatment to the Nicaraguan government and to U.S. officials who have expressed an interest in human rights. They expect little assistance from either." The peasants believe, curiously, that "it is the United States through its economic and military assistance, that provides the 'moral force' that backs oppression here." They blame their eviction on "the desire of Nicaragua's large landholders to acquire still more acreage on which to grow the high-priced, long-fibre cotton that is the country's chief export crop"—a process described above in neighboring Guatemala. The soldiers, the peasants report, came to their villages unannounced, loaded them on trucks and dumped them in the rail yard where they now live. The only "assistance" provided by the government is "the menacing nighttime presence of armed national guard troops who occasionally prowl the outskirts of their encampment." They are totally without income, except for the lucky few who can obtain occasional employment at \$1.70 a day picking and cleaning cotton in surrounding plantations, exhibiting, no doubt, that "pride in their task" referred to in the *Wall Street Journal* advertisement. "Local and international human rights groups charge that these families are among thousands of peasants who have been uprooted from their homes by the national guard...on orders from the handful of wealthy families who own more than 50 percent of the country's cultivated land." Juan Molina, an opposition member of the Nicaraguan House of Deputies, said in an interview that the peasants would prefer non-violent measures, but by such a system they "can't fight what the United States gives (Somoza) in weapons and aid." DeYoung adds that "the U.S.-donated weapons were used last week to put down a brief revolt, led by leftist guerrillas, in which at least 35 persons were killed," noting that "the one thing all Nicaraguans, pro- and anti-Somoza, have in common is a healthy respect for the power and influence of the United States." Molina says that "I know that Carter has good intentions, but above all, he's a North American. A

North American politician. We are a small country, and talking against the dictator suits U.S. purposes right now. But it means nothing here.”

As for the peasants, they increasingly talk of “confrontation”:

So far, the peasants’ campaign has not moved much beyond nighttime meetings at which they quietly strum guitars and sing songs they have written to the beat of protest. The songs, like those of a hundred such struggles that have come and gone in Latin America, speak of unity, of throwing off the landlords—and of an end to suffering.

If they proceed beyond songs, and go back to their villages, they will no longer be pathetic peasants but “left-wing terrorists,” and they will meet the full force of the U.S.-backed military, while Western academics write lengthy tracts attempting to explain the strange rise of Communist terrorism that has become the curse of the twentieth century, embittering lives and sowing the seeds of totalitarianism when the elite is compelled to respond in order to preserve civilized values.

The “garbled rights message” perhaps became a little less garbled shortly after, when the U.S. resolved the “contradiction” by freeing aid to Nicaragua in what “some State Department sources call a bow to congressional supporters of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza.”²⁷⁵ As the elite local opposition to Somoza increased, the U.S. government withheld implementation of the \$2.5 million arms credits previously authorized, trimming “military assistance for Somoza’s forces to only \$150,000 in training grants,” in addition to \$160,000 “quietly released” for a Nicaraguan military hospital. As for the “humanitarian aid,” it is likely to be as efficacious as previous gifts described by Lernoux and others:

The peasants are used to seeing the trucks and material the U.S. government sends here, said one peasant leader. They know that when a sign goes up saying a road or building is a ‘gift of the government and the people of the United States of America,’ it means nothing for them.²⁷⁶

A new factor in the situation, not only in Nicaragua but elsewhere in Latin America as well, is that the U.S. subfascist clients now have access to arms from elsewhere, particularly Israel, which has itself been the beneficiary of unprecedented U.S. military assistance. The fact is occasionally noted in the press. Alan Riding points out that “according to well-placed sources, [President Somoza] added that he had the full support of Brazil and Israel, which over the last 18 months has replaced the United States as Nicaragua’s main arms supplier.”²⁷⁷ This matter has been discussed outside of the United States, including Israel. A report in the Labor Party newspaper *Davar* (1 November 1978) discusses an article by Hugh O’Shaughnessy in the *London Observer* concerning alleged pressures on Israel by the United States and Mexico (which, according to the report, threatened to cut off oil supplies to Israel) to “end its supplying of weapons to the

Government of General Somoza in Nicaragua.” The *Davar* report also cites an article in the West German press which is reported to have identified Israel as one of the major suppliers of arms to Central America, including Nicaragua. The Israeli Foreign Ministry refused to comment, according to *Davar*. The issue of Israeli involvement with Latin American dictatorships received some attention in Israel after three Israeli generals visited Chile and Argentina (see Marcel Zohar, *Ha’aretz*, August 10, 1978, a report from Buenos Aires on the meetings of Israeli Generals with members of the military junta, discussing also Israeli arms sales to Argentina, alleged to be significant).

Columnist Smith Hempstone offers a sympathetic account of Israel’s policy of arming Somoza to repress and slaughter the population of Nicaragua in the *Washington Post* Sunday supplement.^{[278](#)} In the same journal, Hempstone has been irate over the alleged failure of Western opinion to express concern over the fate of victims of Cambodian atrocities (a standard pretense, as we shall see) and has expounded on the moral imperative of bearing witness—in the case of Communist atrocities.^{[279](#)}

On August 22, 1978, Sandinista guerrillas captured the National Palace in the capital city of Managua. A national strike by businessmen began immediately after. In mid-September guerrillas seized major cities throughout the country in what the dictator called a replay of the Tet offensive of 1968. His response was not unlike that of the U.S. forces that occupied South Vietnam. City after city was “destroyed in order to save it.” Thousands were killed in what the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent described as “a bloody war between lightly armed teenagers and National guardsmen.”^{[280](#)} Many were simply executed in towns that were retaken, reduced to rubble by the armaments so generously supplied by the U.S. government, and now by its allies.^{[281](#)}

In an interview with the leader of the guerrilla group that captured the National Palace, Tad Szulc learned that the factor that immediately precipitated the action was President Carter’s letter to Somoza praising him “while our people were being massacred by the dictatorship” (“Commander Zero”). To the guerrillas, the letter “meant support for Somoza, and we were determined to show Carter that Nicaraguans are ready to fight Somoza, the cancer of our country.” A second factor may have been the “earlier administration decision to release aid funds to Nicaragua despite the Somoza repression [which] has already hurt the American image in liberal circles [in Latin America], to say nothing of the effect in leftist groups in the region.” The guerrilla action was timed to coincide with the session of the Nicaraguan congress to approve a loan from the United States.^{[282](#)}

Carter is a man who is loyal to his friends. Only a few weeks after his letter to Somoza, President Carter “telephoned the royal palace [in Iran] to express support for Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, who faced the worst crisis of his 37-year reign.”²⁸³ This time, Carter’s communication followed the machine-gunning of demonstrators by the Shah’s military forces, armed and trained in the United States, which took thousands of lives according to dissidents. To make sure that the message was clear, the world’s leading exponent of Human Rights reemphasized it several times, for example in a statement to the Shah’s son in Washington on October 31:

Our friendship and our alliance with Iran is one of our important bases on which our entire foreign policy depends,” Carter told the young prince, who is undergoing training at the U.S. Air Force Academy. “We’re thankful for this move toward democracy,” Carter added, referring to the Shah’s liberalization policies. “We know it is opposed by some who don’t like democratic principles, but his progressive administration is very valuable, I think, to the entire Western world.”²⁸⁴

It soon became clear even in the United States that those who allegedly “opposed democratic principles” and the Shah’s “progressive administration” included virtually the entire population, no longer able to tolerate his U.S.-backed corruption and oppression. Exactly as in the case of Nicaragua, so in the case of Iran, Carter’s explicit rejection of any concern for democracy or human rights helped to trigger the explosion.²⁸⁵ And just as the United States began to search for some alternative to Somoza when the scale of internal opposition (crucially including business elements) reached such a level that he lost his usefulness, so also in Iran the United States finally backed off from the Shah and began to seek other means to ensure that the country can play its intended role in the U.S.-dominated global system.²⁸⁶ Events in both Iran and Nicaragua in the fall of 1978 illustrate once again the consistent lesson of history: the United States will give massive support to the regimes of torturers and gangsters that it imposes by force and subversion as long as they are successful in maintaining the kind of “stability” that suits U.S. interests, in the manner that we have discussed (see chapter 3). But when popular resistance threatens this “stability,” the U.S. government, never ceasing to proclaim its advocacy of democracy and human rights, will search for alternatives that will prevent the kinds of social and economic change that are perceived as harmful to the interests of those who dominate U.S. society, however beneficial they might be for the victims of U.S. power.

In Nicaragua, the September bloodbath indicated to Washington that its long-standing support for the Somoza dictatorship was no longer contributing to “stability”. It therefore offered to “mediate” between Somoza and the broad-based opposition. But these efforts met with little immediate success. Alan Riding wrote from Managua that 10 weeks after the September slaughter “hope has given way to disappointment and anger” as “moderate

and leftist opposition leaders are distressed by their growing conviction that Washington believes the country's deep crisis can be resolved by replacing the Somoza dictatorship with an equally conservative, though less brutal successor."²⁸⁷ They are, in short, learning the lesson of history. The moderate and left opposition, Riding continues, "think Washington, fearing 'another Cuba,' is searching for stability rather than for social and economic change or even human rights—repeating, as they see it, American policy during its occupation of Nicaragua between 1912 and 1933, and its subsequent support for the Somoza family." Were the U.S. system of brainwashing under freedom not so effective, Riding might have perceived and gone on to explain that there have been and remain very powerful reasons, rooted in the U.S. socioeconomic system, for the long-term consistency of U.S. policy and the concern of the United States for the very specific form of "stability" on which we have commented repeatedly, not only in the case of Central America but wherever U.S. influence reaches. Nicaraguans are aware that the U.S. proposal "skims over social problems and ignores the guerrillas," and they are also no doubt aware of the reasons, which are inexpressible within the U.S. doctrinal system. They further "note that the Carter Administration was silent when the National Guard killed 3,000 people in crushing the September insurrection, but moved quickly to mediate when it recognized the popularity of the Sandinist guerrillas." And we strongly suspect that the "tens of thousands of Nicaraguans [who] are fighting for a new society as well as a new government" do not consider the behavior of the Carter Administration to be an odd and inexplicable deviation from traditional U.S. benevolence, but rather have a much better understanding of the forces working to block their efforts than do those in the U.S. media who occasionally report their disillusionment with U.S. tactics.

As the dust was settling in Nicaragua and people were returning to the ruins of their homes to bury the dead, thoughtful commentators in the United States attempted to assess what had taken place. John M. Goshko of the *Washington Post* explained that "the hope that Nicaragua could be moved gradually and peacefully toward democracy was dashed August 22 when a guerrilla group dramatically attacked the national palace in Managua and touched off the unrest that escalated into civil war." This episode reveals the limits of U.S. power and the quandaries that face a government that is deeply committed to the pursuit of human rights.²⁸⁸ Foreign commentators saw the matter in a somewhat different light. *Le Monde* noted editorially that the U.S. government, while insisting in a September statement that it "was not trying to get General Anastasio Somoza to step down," nevertheless was "beginning to distance itself from one of Latin America's bloodiest and longest lasting dictatorships," limiting itself to "cautious phrasemongering," however,

though it is clear that “the dictator would have been highly vulnerable to a total suspension of U.S. aid, a practical embargo on arms shipments and an unequivocal condemnation of his ghoulish style of government. By refusing to take this decisive step, President Carter had seriously damaged the credibility of the stances he has often taken on behalf of human rights.”²⁸⁹ The “new inflection” in U.S. policy “is undoubtedly a reaction to the news coming out of Managua of savage and mindless atrocities committed by the Nicaraguan National Guard in many parts of the country” while “the United States did nothing whatever to stop the slaughter when there was still time”:

United States responsibility in this shocking business is all the greater since it created the situation in the first place. Changing it would in no way be interference in the internal affairs of a state like any other, but at most it would right a grave historic wrong the people of Nicaragua have paid for too dearly and which has profited a good many American firms far too handsomely.

Washington observers, however, prefer to lament the limits of U.S. power, which are selectively discovered when there is a problem of impeding a massacre by U.S.-armed forces of a friendly dictator—though the quandary in Washington is real enough, now that the business community is unified against Somoza. The *Manchester Guardian* meanwhile commiserated with President Carter because the Organization of American States (which “looks increasingly like a military dictators’ club with the United States feebly protesting against tyranny from a minority position”) refused “to investigate the well-documented atrocities committed by the National Guard in Nicaragua,” probably “a matter of grief to President Carter” with his well-known commitment to human rights. Nothing further is said about why the OAS looks increasingly like a military dictators’ club, or how this relates to U.S. policy over many years.²⁹⁰

The Carter Administration would have liked Somoza to resign and be replaced by “moderates,” but it did not openly call for his resignation or entirely withdraw support from him. This vacillation set the stage for Somoza’s forceful suppression of a virtually unified Nicaraguan population and the death of thousands in September, 1978, again compliments of the U.S.-trained and -armed national guard. With U.S.-supplied helicopters and gunships and other sophisticated weaponry, Somoza demonstrated that U.S. counterinsurgency techniques may now permit pacification by proxy of a unified hostile population. Once again we have an impressive demonstration of Washington’s devotion to human rights; in this case, we see subfacism in the last stages of decay, with mindless brutality and uncontrollable greed that bring even the vast bulk of the local business elite into an alliance with the left, while the liberal Carter is still unable to dissociate himself from the torture regime.

The story is much the same elsewhere, for example, in Bolivia, where a coup that overturned the first elections in 12 years followed by the reported arrest of at least 100 labor and student leaders and human rights activists inspired the State Department to comment that it would withhold judgment about the future of U.S. relations with Bolivia, “pending a clarification” of the new government’s intentions.²⁹¹ Or in El Salvador, where a priest is quoted as saying that “the peasants live like serfs in Europe 400 years ago”²⁹²—if they are lucky enough to survive at all.

A report three years later describes the familiar pattern.²⁹³ “Hopes of peaceful democratic change were dashed in elections in 1972 and again in February 1977, when the military government resorted to fraud to block moderately reformist opposition candidates for the presidency. In apparent response, three Marxist guerrilla organizations...have emerged since 1975 and have been responsible for a large number of killings, bombings and kidnappings,” so that many “wealthy businessmen and farmers in El Salvador are living in fear.” And “after an increase in repression by the military government, militant labor and peasant leaders are also living in fear, many trying to hold together their organizations while in hiding, some having ‘disappeared’ or landed in jail” in a country in which, “perhaps more than in any other Latin American country, wealth...is concentrated in few hands, with successive military regimes either unwilling or too weak to contemplate even the modest social and land reforms that have taken place in other countries of the region.” Particularly worrisome to the wealthy elite is “the growing militancy of the peasants—making up 60% of the population of five million—and the evident appeal of a new leftist organization called the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, which has united anti-government workers, peasants, students, teachers and urban squatters” since 1975 and is “closely linked with progressive sectors of the Roman Catholic Church.” Church sources report many killings, arrests and disappearances in the preceding few months. Offensives against peasants by “a large government-run paramilitary organization” have also taken a heavy toll. The secretary-general of the Federation of Christian peasants and the Farm Workers Union alleges that “the government’s aim is to destroy all popular organizations, but it is aiming most at the peasant groups because they are growing fastest. There is a lot of fear, but hunger and misery oblige people to keep on fighting despite the repression. The peasants are desperate.” The government, meanwhile, portrays itself as “trapped between the extreme left and the extreme right,” a major problem being that “the extreme left is using the popular organizations,” according to the president’s information secretary.

Meanwhile the State Department Human Rights reports assure us that although there has been violence in the universities “triggered by an announcement of higher tuition fees” and perhaps “some isolated instances...of actions perpetrated by government agents which could be considered repressive,” matters are more or less in hand, and El Salvador is “partly free,” according to Freedom House (1977). The 1978 report notes “an upsurge of terrorism by extremists of both left and right” and refers to charges that the paramilitary organization is responsible for “some abuses.” But despite these possible abuses and such problems as “a highly skewed income” and overpopulation, things are improving and in fact by the end of 1977 “there seemed to be greater freedom to participate in the political process than earlier in the year.”

As those notes indicate, an assiduous reader of the nation’s press can obtain a picture of what is happening in Latin America as the continent becomes “one gigantic prison, and in some regions one vast cemetery,” in the words of the “Open Letter” cited at the outset, though much is disguised or withheld and analysis of the systematic and pervasive character of U.S. influence and intervention and its obvious roots in a domestic socioeconomic structure is spectacularly lacking. A semi-rational approach to international affairs, which relates prevailing phenomena to the existing distribution of power, is restricted to enemies of the state, and is then often embroidered with convenient mythology. In the U.S. domains, such an approach is excluded as unthinkable, and we read only of the limits of U.S. power, the quandaries of the human rights administration, certain past errors that have long been overcome though their consequences still haunt us, and so on. If the press and academic scholarship were free of compelling ideological blinders, the story of the United States in Latin America would be at the core of study of U.S. international affairs, past and current. Given the substantial and often determining U.S. influence on the region, the current plague of benign and constructive terror would be the central concern of human rights activists. Such is very far from the case.

Bloodbaths in Indochina: Constructive, Nefarious and Mythical

The sheer scope and intensity of the violence imposed on Indochina by the U.S. war machine forced a great deal of information into the public domain and consciousness. The public was, nevertheless, spared a full picture of the war's true nature, and was kept in a state of confusion by a steady flow of allegations of enemy terror, assertions of Washington's benevolent intentions, and the pretense that the enormous destruction of the civil societies of Indochina resulted from the fact that "war inevitably hurts many innocent people." Enough got through the propaganda filter, however, to open many eyes to the ugly reality and to shatter the complacent faith of large numbers of Americans in the competence, humanity, and integrity of their leaders.

In reconstructing the faith it has been necessary to expunge from many memories the brutalities and lies of the war, and to transform the historical record so as to obfuscate its causes, minimize the toll it exacted upon its victims, and discount its meaning and historic significance. Much progress has been made along these lines by a simple process of non-discussion and suppression, allowing the war to fade, except where anti-Communist points can be scored. The propagandists have proven their mettle already on the crucial issue of cause and intent; they have succeeded in wiping the record clean of the substantial documentary evidence of rational imperial planning that provided the framework for the U.S. interventions, interpreting them more comfortably in terms of neutral categories such as "error" or "ignorance" in a framework of concern for freedom. A renewed effort has also commenced to show that the policies of search-and-destroy, harassment-and-interdiction fire, and napalming and high level bombing of densely populated areas were really not intended to kill civilians.¹ Rather, as Sidney Hook had already emphasized back when the U.S. was blowing up villages "suspected" of harboring "terrorists,"² the resulting casualties were not "deliberate American atrocities" but merely "the unfortunate accidental loss of life incurred by the efforts of American military forces to help the South Vietnamese repel the incursions of North Vietnam and its partisans"; or in a later version, "unintended consequences of military action."³

In volume II, we will consider the process of historical reconstruction in the context of analysis of Western reactions to developments in postwar Indochina. Here we will only review very briefly some salient features of the U.S. onslaught, soon to be lost in the mist of obfuscation and deceit as the propaganda system turns to the tasks that lie ahead. We

will restrict the discussion to South Vietnam⁴ and will not make any effort to touch on more than a few issues and examples. We have written on the subject extensively elsewhere, as have many others.⁵

5.1 Constructive Bloodbaths in Vietnam

5.1.1 French and Diemist Bloodbaths

Although the only pre-1965 bloodbath recognized in official doctrine is that which occurred in North Vietnam during its land reform of the mid-50s, there were others. In 1946, without warning, the French bombarded Haiphong, killing an estimated 6000 civilians,⁶ perhaps more than the number of victims of the well publicized North Vietnamese land reform episode (see section 5.2.2). But as part of the French recolonization effort, and with Vietnam of little interest to the American leadership, this bloodbath was ignored and has not been mentioned by U.S. official or non-official propagandists in their historical reconstructions of terror in Indochina.

Diem's bloodbaths also were impressive, but as they were in the service of anti-Communism and the preservation of our client, they fall into the constructive or benign categories. Under our tutelage, Diem began his own "search-and-destroy" operations in the mid- and late 1950s, and his prison camps and the torture chambers were filled and active. In 1956 the official figure for political prisoners in South Vietnam was fifteen to twenty thousand. Even Diem's friend and adviser, P. J. Honey, concluded on the basis of talks with former inmates, that the majority of these were "neither Communists nor pro-Communists."⁷ The maltreatment and massacre of political prisoners was a regular practice during the Diem period, although these problems became much more acute in later years.⁸ The 1958 massacre of prisoners in Diem's concentration camp Phu Loi led to such an outcry that P. J. Honey was dispatched to inquire into these events; according to Lacouture, Honey could not verify more than twenty deaths at Phu Loi.⁹

"Pacification" as it developed from the earliest Diem period consisted in "killing, or arresting without either evidence or trials, large numbers of persons suspected of being Vietminh or 'rebels'."¹⁰ This resulted in many small bloodbaths at the local level, plus larger ones associated with military expeditions carried out by Diem against the rural population. One former Vietminh resistance fighter gave the following account of the Diemist terror and bloodbath in his village:

My village chief was a stranger to the village. He was very cruel. He hunted all the former members of the Communist Party during the Resistance to arrest and kill them. All told, he slaughtered fourteen Party members in my village. I saw him with my own eyes order the killing of two Party members in Mau Lam

hamlet. They had their hands tied behind their backs and they were buried alive by the militia. I was scared to death.^{[11](#)}

Another former resistance fighter in Central Vietnam claimed that

in 1956, the local government of Quang Nam started a terrorist action against old Resistance members. About 10,000 persons of the Resistance Army were arrested, and a good many of them were slaughtered. I had to run for my life, and I stayed in the mountains until 1960. I lived with three others who came from my village. We got help from the tribal population there.^{[12](#)}

The general mechanics of the larger bloodbaths were described by Joseph Buttinger, a former Diem supporter and advisor.^{[13](#)}

In June 1956 Diem organized two massive expeditions to the regions that were controlled by the Communists without the slightest use of force. His soldiers arrested tens of thousands of people...Hundreds, perhaps thousands of peasants were killed. Whole villages whose populations were not friendly to the government were destroyed by artillery. These facts were kept secret from the American people.^{[14](#)}

According to Jeffrey Race, a former U.S. Army advisor in South Vietnam who had access to extensive documentation on recent Vietnamese history,

...the government terrorized far more than did the revolutionary movement—for example, by liquidations of former Vietminh, by artillery and ground attacks on “communist villages,” and by roundups of “communist sympathizers.” Yet it was just these tactics that led to the constantly increasing strength of the revolutionary movement in Long An from 1960 to 1965.^{[15](#)}

During the period 1955-60 the Vietminh mission was political, and “though it used assassinations and kidnapping,” according to the *Pentagon Papers* historian it “circumspectly avoided military operations.”^{[16](#)} A USMAAG report of July 1957 stated: “The Viet Cong guerrillas and propagandists...are still waging a grim battle for survival. In addition to an accelerated propaganda campaign, the Communists have been forming ‘front’ organizations...seeking to spread the theory of ‘Peace and Co-existence.’”^{[17](#)} On the other hand, Diem, at least through 1957, was having “marked success with fairly sophisticated pacification programs in the countryside.”^{[18](#)} In a precise analogy to his sponsor’s pacification efforts of 1965-72, “By the end of 1956, the civic action component of the GVN pacification program had been cut back severely.”^{[19](#)} The Pentagon historian refers to “Diem’s nearly paranoid preoccupation with security,” which led to policies that “thoroughly terrified the Vietnamese peasants, and detracted significantly from the regime’s popularity.”^{[20](#)}

According to the Pentagon historian, “No direct links have been established between Hanoi and perpetrators of rural violence.”^{[21](#)} The phrase “perpetrators of rural violence” is applied by the Pentagon historian only to the Vietminh, who admittedly were concentrating on political activities, and not to the Diem regime, which as he notes was conducting a policy of large-scale reprisals and violence, so extensive and

undiscriminating as to be counterproductive. It is not difficult to establish “direct links” between Washington and perpetrators of the Diemist repression, incidentally. Once again it is clear that “constructive” bloodbaths can never involve “violence” for establishment propagandists and scholars; the word is reserved for those seeking social change in an illegitimate direction and under improper auspices.

Diem’s extensive use of violence and reprisals against former Resistance fighters was in direct violation of the Geneva Accords (Article 14c), as was his refusal to abide by the election proviso.²² The main reason for Diem’s refusal to abide by this mode of settlement in 1955-56 was quite evident: the expatriate mandarin imported from the United States had minimal popular support and little hope of winning in a free election. (This sequence of events has not prevented the liberal establishment from claiming that our intervention in South Vietnam was to assure “self-determination”.) Diem was a typical subfascist tyrant, compensating for lack of indigenous support with extra doses of terror. Violence is the natural mode of domination for those without local roots or any positive strategy for gaining support, in this instance the United States and its client regime. It is striking that irrespective of the facts, American officials and journalists throughout the succeeding struggle formulated the issues in terms of “control of the population” (how can we wrest areas from Viet Cong “control”?, etc.), projecting their own inability to conceive of “support” on the hated enemy, who was not so limited in either policies or programs that might yield political successes without violence.

Diem’s immediate resort to violence was in marked contrast to the behavior of those designated in the *Pentagon Papers* as “perpetrators of rural violence;” we return below (5.2.1) to Race’s detailed and well-documented study of how the Communist Party rejected the use of violence “even in self-defense, against the increasing repressiveness of the government” (p. 104), while winning popular support through its social programs, until driven by Diem’s repression to resorting to force in order to survive. Wherever detailed studies have been carried out, the conclusions are rather similar.

As for the toll exacted among the South Vietnamese during the Diem period, there are no firm estimates. Bernard Fall reports figures, which he seems to regard as realistic, indicating a death toll of over 150,000 “Viet Cong” from 1957 to April 1965—that is, before the first North Vietnamese battalion was allegedly detected in the South. These South Vietnamese, in his words, had been fighting “under the crushing weight of American armor, napalm, jet bombers and, finally, vomiting gases.”²³ These 150,000 (or whatever the actual numbers may be) have also never been counted among the victims of

a pre-1965 “bloodbath.” Rather, they were physically eliminated in a classic exercise of constructive violence, and are now being eliminated from the historical record in a no less classic exercise of a hegemonic system of ideology and propaganda.

5.1.2 The Overall U.S. Assault as the Primary Bloodbath

In a very real sense the overall U.S. effort in South Vietnam was a huge and deliberately imposed bloodbath. Military escalation was undertaken to offset the well-understood lack of any significant social and political base for the elite military faction supported by the United States. Despite occasional expressions of interest in the welfare and free choice of the South Vietnamese, the documents in the *Pentagon Papers* show that U.S. planners consistently regarded the impact of their decisions on the Vietnamese as a peripheral issue at most, more commonly as totally inconsequential. Nonintervention and an NLF takeover were unacceptable for reasons that had nothing to do with Vietnamese interests; they were based on an assumed adverse effect on our material and strategic interests. It was assumed that an American failure would be harmful to our prestige and would reduce the confidence of our satellite governments that we would protect them from the winds of change.²⁴ The Thai elite, for example, might “conclude that we simply could not be counted on” to help them in suppressing local insurgencies. What is more, there was the constant threat of a “demonstration effect” of real social and economic progress in China,²⁵ North Korea,²⁶ and North Vietnam.²⁷

In spite of official reiterations of the alleged threat of Chinese and North Vietnamese “expansionism,” it was recognized by U.S. policy makers that a unified Communist Vietnam probably would have limited ambitions itself, and would provide a barrier to any Chinese moves further South.²⁸ It is not the threat of military expansion that official documents cite as the justification for the huge assault on Vietnam. Rather, it was feared that by processes never spelled out in detail, “the rot [might] spread to Thailand”²⁹ and perhaps beyond. The “rot” can only be the Communist “ideological threat;” that is, the possibility of social and economic progress outside the framework of U.S. control and imperial interests, which must be fought by U.S. intervention against local Communist organizing or uprisings, whether or not any Communist armed attack is involved. This is the rot that might spread to Thailand and beyond, inspiring Communist-led nationalist movements. But no skillful ideologists would want such implications spelled out too clearly to themselves or to others. Consequently, the central factors involved remain vague, their place taken by rhetoric about aggression, threatened bloodbaths, and our interest in self-determination.

It is important to bear in mind that these concepts—in fact, even the terminology in which they were expressed—were not invented by Vietnam planners. Rather, they merely adopted a standard mechanism of proven effectiveness in mobilizing support for U.S. intervention. When Dean Acheson faced the problem of convincing the “leaders of Congress” (his quotes) to support the Truman Doctrine in February, 1947, he outlined the threat to them as follows:

In the past eighteen months, I said, Soviet pressure on the Straits, on Iran, and on northern Greece had brought the Balkans to the point where a highly possible Soviet breakthrough might open three continents to Soviet penetration. Like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the east. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France, already threatened by the strongest domestic Communist parties in Western Europe.³⁰

As Acheson well knew, Soviet pressure on the Straits and Iran had been withdrawn already and Western control was firmly established. Further, there was no evidence of Soviet pressure on Northern Greece—on the contrary, Stalin was unsympathetic to the Greek guerrillas. Still the rot might spread unless the U.S. undertook to rescue the terrorist regime in Athens, and a “Soviet breakthrough” was a useful propaganda device with which to mobilize domestic support. Acheson was concerned with the more remote dominoes—the Middle East and the industrial societies that were subject to the “threat” of internal democratic politics that might bring Communist parties to power, thwarting U.S. intentions. Similarly in the case of Indochina, it was the potential exit from the Free World of Indonesia with its rich resources, and ultimately industrial Japan, that obsessed U.S. planners as they contemplated the threat of falling dominoes and rotting apples.

Gabriel Kolko comments accurately that “translated into concrete terms, the domino theory [previously invoked with regard to Greece and the Middle East, as he notes] was a counterrevolutionary doctrine which defined modern history as a movement of Third World and dependent nations—those with economic and strategic value to the United States or its capitalist associates—away from colonialism or capitalism and toward national revolution and forms of socialism.”³¹ In its specific application to Indochina, the falling dominoes led inexorably to Japan, the “superdomino” in the nightmare of the planners, investing their effort to prevent an unwelcome form of independence in Indochina with cosmic significance.³² Again, mainstream scholarship is assiduously at work removing this no less unwelcome issue from the realm of discussion.

As the *Pentagon Papers* and other documentary evidence show beyond question, top-level U.S. planners never had any doubt that in backing French colonialism and later intervening directly they were placing themselves in opposition to the main currents of Vietnamese nationalism, though a show of rage about aggression directed from Moscow

or “Peiping” was always considered necessary for public relations purposes, and was always saleable to the mass media and important segments of academic scholarship. Illusions about a unified International Communist movement responsible for events in Indochina were not only fostered by propagandists, but also came to be accepted doctrine among high level planners themselves, even surviving the China-Soviet schism that was apparent by the late 1950s. A similar mixture of pretense for the population and internal delusion was standard with regard to the situation in South Vietnam, as we can see from the account of the *Pentagon Papers* historians and the government documents they provide.³³

The U.S. leadership knew that in Vietnam the “primary sources of Communist strength in the South remain indigenous,” with a corresponding “ability to recruit locally;” and it was recognized that the NLF “enjoys some status as a nationalist movement,” whereas the military government “is composed primarily of technicians” lacking in “positive support from various key segments of the populace” and determined “to remain the real power in South Vietnam” without any “interference from the civilians in the conduct of the war.”³⁴ The experienced pacification chief, John Paul Vann, writing in 1965, puts the matter more brutally:

A popular political base for the Government of South Vietnam does not now exist....The existing government is oriented toward the exploitation of the rural and lower class urban populations. It is, in fact, a continuation of the French colonial system of government with upper class Vietnamese replacing the French....The dissatisfaction of the agrarian population...is expressed largely through alliance with the NLF.³⁵

It was thus well known to U.S. authorities in 1965, as before, that they were fighting a nationalist mass movement in the name of a corrupt oligarchy that lacked popular backing. The Vietnam War was fought to return this nationalist mass movement to that “measure of passivity and defeatism” identified by Pool as necessary for “stability” in the Third World (see chapter 3, note 5). It must be brought under comprador-military control of the sort that the U.S. has imposed or supported in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Bolivia, Thailand, etc. As we have noted, however, the power to rationalize self-interest is great, and some U.S. leaders may have been able to keep their minds from being cluttered with inconvenient facts. In so doing, they preserved the belief that because we were the “good guys” our purposes must be benign and democratic and must have some positive relationship to the interests of the South Vietnamese people. Even the evidence that we were directing a large part of our military effort to assaulting and uprooting the rural population of the South, already overwhelming before 1965, was easily assimilated into the Orwellian doctrine of “defense against aggression.”

The decision to employ technologically advanced conventional weaponry against the southern countryside made a certain amount of sense on two assumptions: first, that the revolutionary forces were predominant in the rural areas, so that the war had to be a true anti-population war to force submission; and second, that the “demonstration effect” is important to U.S. interests, so that our job was to terrorize, kill and destroy in order to prove that revolution “doesn’t pay.” The first assumption was true in fact and must be assumed to have contributed to the gradual emergence of a full-fledged policy of search-and-destroy and unrestrained firepower, whatever the human consequences. The second assumption was evidently important in the thinking of high level U.S. planners and advisers and also contributed to the evolution of policy.³⁶

The very terminology of the planners reflected these accurate perceptions, as is noted occasionally by the *Pentagon Papers* analysts. A U.S. official commented that “essentially, we are fighting Vietnam’s birth rate,” in accordance with Westmoreland’s concept of a “meatgrinder” (“where we could kill large numbers of the enemy, but in the end do little better than hold our own,” in the words of the *Pentagon Papers* historian). Some in the U.S. remained optimistic. Robert (“Blowtorch”) Komer, who was in charge of the “other war,” cheerfully reported in early 1967 that “we are grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass” in what he correctly perceived as a “revolutionary, largely political conflict,” though he never drew the obvious conclusions that follow from these conjoined observations.³⁷ Komer went on to recommend, rationally enough from the point of view of a major war criminal, that the United States must “*step up refugee programs deliberately aimed at depriving the VC of a recruiting base*” (his emphasis). Thus the United States could deprive the enemy of what the Combined Campaign Plan 1967 identifies as its “greatest asset,” namely, “the people.”

In January 1966, the well-known humanitarian Robert McNamara, now a passionate spokesman for the world’s poor in his capacity as head of the World Bank, introduced evidence in Congressional testimony on the success of air and artillery attacks, including B-52 raids (“the most devastating and frightening weapons used so far against the VC”), in forcing villagers “to move where they will be safe from such attacks...regardless of their attitude to the GVN.” One can gain certain insight into the mentality of pro-war intellectuals from the fact that McNamara’s evidence was reprinted in the pro-war journal *Vietnam Perspectives* (May 1966) to show how well things were going for our side. A month earlier, General Westmoreland had predicted “a tremendous increase in the number of refugees,”³⁸ an expectation that was soon fulfilled as a result of B-52 bombings and

other tactics. Meanwhile other humanitarians (e.g., Leo Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee) thoughtfully explained how refugees were fleeing from Communism. (See Volume II, chapter 6, for references).

The character of U.S. policy was also influenced by the gradual recognition of two additional facts: first, that the South Vietnamese victims of “pacification” were essentially voiceless, unable to reach U.S. or world opinion even as effectively as the North Vietnamese, with the result that the population being “saved” could be treated with virtually unrestrained violence. The second fact was that relevant U.S. sensitivities (i.e., those of politically significant numbers of people) were almost exclusively related to U.S. casualties and costs. Both of these considerations encouraged the development of an indiscriminate war of firepower, a war of shooting first and making inquiries later; this would minimize U.S. casualties and have the spin-off benefit of more thoroughly terrorizing the population. The enhanced civilian casualties need not be reported—the enormous statistical service of the Pentagon always had difficulty dredging up anything credible on this one question—or such casualties could be reported as “enemy” or “Vietcong.” Years of familiarity with this practice did not cause the news services to refrain from transmitting, as straight news, Saigon and Pentagon handouts on “enemy” casualties.

The retrospective judgment of the generals themselves on the accuracy of casualty reports makes interesting reading. General Douglas Kinnard published a study based on responses of Army Generals who had been commanders in Vietnam to a variety of questions, including one on the accuracy of “body counts.” Only 26% of the respondents felt that body count figures were “within reason accurate.” The query elicited such responses as these: “The immensity of the false reporting is a blot on the honor of the Army;” “They were grossly exaggerated by many units primarily because of the incredible interest shown by people like McNamara and Westmoreland;” “A fake—totally worthless;” “Gruesome—a ticket punching item;” “Often blatant lies.”³⁹ Most generals felt that the body count was exaggerated, but that reaction must be coupled with a recognition that much of the air and artillery barrage was directed against targets where casualties would never be known or counted. Kinnard, for example, reports that when he returned to Vietnam in May, 1969 as Commanding General of II Field Force Artillery he discovered that targets were being selected at random in areas where nighttime firing was authorized—quite substantial areas, as we know from other sources. Who might be killed by such random fire will never be known in the West. Reporters on the scene have made similar observations. Katsuichi Honda of *Asahi Shimbun*, perhaps the only pro-Western

correspondent to have spent any time in the liberated areas of South Vietnam, described the incessant attacks on undefended villages by gunboats in the Mekong River and helicopter gunships “firing away at random at farmhouses”:

They seemed to fire whimsically and in passing even though they were not being shot at from the ground nor could they identify the people as NLF. They did it impulsively for fun, using the farmers for targets as if in a hunting mood. They are hunting Asians... This whimsical firing would explain the reason why the surgical wards in every hospital in the towns of the Mekong Delta were full of wounded.⁴⁰

In the Mekong Delta, there were virtually no North Vietnamese troops when Honda reported in the fall of 1967. The victims of these hunting trips were not listed in the “body counts” and are not included in any accounting of “bloodbaths”.

Still other factors were involved in making the entire U.S. enterprise in Vietnam a huge bloodbath; faith in technological solutions, racism reinforced by the corruption of “our” Vietnamese and the helplessness of the victimized population, and the frustrations of war. But essentially the initial high level decision to bomb freely, to conduct search-and-destroy operations, and to fight a war against the rural population with virtually unlimited force were the source of the bloodbath. The essence of the U.S. war in “saving” South Vietnam was well expressed by a U.S. Marine, in a 1967 letter to Senator William Fulbright:

I went to Vietnam, a hard charging Marine 2nd Lieutenant, sure that I had answered the plea of a victimized people in their struggle against communist aggression. That belief lasted about two weeks. Instead of fighting communist aggressors I found that 90% of the time our military actions were directed against the people of South Vietnam. These people had little sympathy or for that matter knowledge of the Saigon Government... We are engaged in a war in South Vietnam to pound a people into submission to a government that has little or no popular support among the real people of South Vietnam. By real people I mean all those Vietnamese people who aren't war profiteers or who have [not] sold out to their government or the United States because it was the easy and/or profitable thing to do.⁴¹

The immensity of the overall U.S. imposed bloodbath can be inferred to some degree from the sheer volume of ordnance employed, the nature of the weaponry, and the principles which governed their use. Through the end of 1971 over 3.9 million tons of bombs were dropped on South Vietnam from the air alone—about double the total bomb tonnage used by the United States in all theaters during World War II—with ground ordnance also employed in historically unprecedented volume.⁴² A large fraction of the napalm used in Indochina was dropped in South Vietnam, an illustration of the abuse visited on the voiceless South Vietnamese (in protecting them from “aggression”!) by the U.S. command in collaboration with its client government in Saigon. Over 90% of the air strikes in South Vietnam were classified officially as “interdiction”,⁴³ which means bombing not carried out in support of specific ongoing military actions, but rather area bombing, frequently on a programmed basis, and attacks on “what are suspected” to be

“enemy base camps,” or sites from which a shot may have been fired.

One former military intelligence officer with the Americal Division in South Vietnam told a congressional subcommittee: “Every information report (IR) we wrote based on our sources’ information was classified as (1) unverifiable and (2) usually reliable source... The unverified and in fact unverifiable information, nevertheless, was used regularly as input to artillery strikes, harassment and interdiction fire (H&I), B-52 and other air strikes, often on populated areas.”⁴⁴ In the words of Army Chief of Staff General Johnson, “We have not enough information. We act with ruthlessness, like a steamroller, bombing extensive areas and not selected targets based on detailed intelligence.”⁴⁵ This is an expression of indiscriminateness as a principle—deliberate, calculated and discriminate indiscriminateness—and it is a perfect complement to the other facets of a policy which was from the beginning semi-genocidal in purpose and method, resting in large part on the fact that the civilian population has been regarded as enemy or, at best, of no account.

The number of civilian casualties inflicted on South Vietnam is unknown, but is very likely underestimated by the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees at 400,000 dead, 900,000 wounded and 6.4 million turned into refugees.⁴⁶ Conservative as these figures are, however, they mean “that there is hardly a family in South Vietnam that has not suffered a death, injury or the anguish of abandoning an ancient homestead.”⁴⁷

That the overall U.S. assault on South Vietnam involved a huge bloodbath can also be inferred from the nature of “pacification,” both in general concept and in the details of implementation. We shall not here go into the general concept and the ways in which it was applied and was rapidly transformed into the wholesale killing and forced transfer of civilians.⁴⁸ We shall confine ourselves to an examination of three cases: a specific operation by U.S. forces over a brief time period; a series of atrocities perpetrated over a six- or seven-year period by our South Korean mercenary allies, with the certain knowledge and tacit acceptance of U.S. authorities; and the Phoenix program of extra-legal “counter-terror” against enemy civilians. These are by no means the only bloodbaths that typify the constructive mode, but they are offered as illustrative and deserving of greater attention.

5.1.3 Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS

The atrocities committed by Westmoreland’s killing machine as it was “grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass” are readily discerned even in the bureaucratic prose of the *Pentagon Papers* and other government reports, but it was only after the Tet

offensive of December 1967-February 1968, when the *Pentagon Papers* record terminates, that the full force of U.S. power was launched against the defenseless population of South Vietnam. Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS, conducted in the first six months of 1969, was only one of many major pacification efforts. It is unusual primarily in that it was studied in detail by Alex Shimkin and Kevin Buckley,⁴⁹ who examined the military and hospital records of the operation and interviewed South Vietnamese inhabitants and pacification officials of the Mekong Delta province of Kien Hoa, the target of SPEEDY EXPRESS.

For many years, the province had been “almost totally controlled” by the NLF:

For a long time there was little or no military activity in the Delta. The 9th Division [which carried out the operation] did not even arrive until the end of 1966. Front activities went far beyond fighting. The VC ran schools, hospitals and even businesses. A pacification study revealed that an NLF sugar cane cooperative for three villages in the Mo Cay district of Kien Hoa produced revenue in 1968 which exceeded the entire Saigon government budget that year for Kien Hoa.

There appear to have been no North Vietnamese units present. As late as January 22, 1968, Defense Secretary McNamara had testified before the Senate that “no regular North Vietnamese units” were engaged in the Delta,⁵⁰ and while some entered after the massive killing of NLF guerrillas and civilians during the Tet offensive and after, there is no indication in the reports that the “enemy” in Kien Hoa included units of the North Vietnamese army.

Despite the success of the NLF, the “aggressive military effort carried out by the U.S. 9th Infantry Division” had succeeded in establishing some degree of government control.⁵¹ In the six months of SPEEDY EXPRESS, this control was significantly extended; “a total of some 120,000 people who had been living in VC controlled areas” came under government control. This result was achieved by application of the “awesome firepower” of the 9th Division, including air strikes using napalm, high explosives and anti-personnel bombs, B-52 bombing, and artillery shelling “around the clock” at a level that “it is impossible to reckon.” Armed helicopters “scour[ed] the landscape from the air night and day,” accounting for “many and perhaps most of the enemy kills.” Buckley’s *Newsweek* account describes the events as follows:

All the evidence I gathered pointed to a clear conclusion: a staggering number of noncombatant civilians—perhaps as many as 5,000 according to one official—were killed by U.S. firepower to “pacify” Kien Hoa. The death toll there made the My Lai massacre look trifling by comparison...

The Ninth Division put all it had into the operation. Eight thousand infantrymen scoured the heavily populated countryside, but contact with the elusive enemy was rare. Thus, in its pursuit of pacification, the division relied heavily on its 50 artillery pieces, 50 helicopters (many armed with rockets and mini-guns) and the deadly support lent by the Air Force. There were 3,381 tactical air strikes by fighter bombers during “Speedy Express”...

“Death is our business and business is good,” was the slogan painted on one helicopter unit’s quarters

during the operation. And so it was. Cumulative statistics for “Speedy Express” show that 10,899 “enemy” were killed. In the month of March alone, “over 3,000 enemy troops were killed...which is the largest monthly total for any American division in the Vietnam War,” said the division’s official magazine. When asked to account for the enormous body counts, a division senior officer explained that helicopter gun crews often caught unarmed “enemy” in open fields. But Vietnamese repeatedly told me that those “enemy” were farmers gunned down while they worked in their rice fields...

There is overwhelming evidence that virtually all the Viet Cong were well armed. Simple civilians were, of course, not armed. And the enormous discrepancy between the body count [11,000] and the number of captured weapons [748] is hard to explain—except by the conclusion that many victims were unarmed innocent civilians...

The people who still live in pacified Kien Hoa all have vivid recollections of the devastation that American firepower brought to their lives in early 1969. Virtually every person to whom I spoke had suffered in some way. “There were 5,000 people in our village before 1969, but there were none in 1970,” one village elder told me. “The Americans destroyed every house with artillery, air strikes, or by burning them down with cigarette lighters. About 100 people were killed by bombing, others were wounded and others became refugees. Many were children killed by concussion from the bombs which their small bodies could not withstand, even if they were hiding underground.”

Other officials, including the village police chief, corroborated the man’s testimony. I could not, of course, reach every village. But in each of the many places where I went, the testimony was the same: 100 killed here, 200 killed there. One old man summed up all the stories: “The Americans killed some VC but only a small number. But of civilians, there were a large number killed...”

Buckley’s notes add further detail. In the single month of March, the Ben Tre hospital reported 343 people wounded by “friendly” fire as compared with 25 by “the enemy.” And as a U.S. pacification official noted, “Many people who were wounded died on the way to the hospitals,” or were treated elsewhere (at home, in VC hospitals or ARVN dispensaries). And, of course, unknown numbers were simply killed outright. Buckley’s actual citation about the “perhaps as many as 5,000 deaths” is that of a senior pacification official who estimated that “at least 5,000” of those killed “were what we refer to as non-combatants”—to which we may add that the “combatants,” who are considered fair game in most U.S. reporting and historical analysis, were of course also South Vietnamese attempting to resist the overwhelming power of a foreign enemy. (Do we exculpate the Nazis for the killing of Resistance fighters in Europe?)

Interviews in the “pacified” areas add to the grim picture. One medic reported that this hospital took care of at least 1,000 people in four villages in early 1969. “Without exception the people testified that most of the civilians had been killed by a relentless night and day barrage of rockets, shells, bombs and bullets from planes, artillery and helicopters.” In one area of four villages, the population was reduced from 16,000 to 1,600—which raises some questions about the official figures of casualties, largely fantasy in any event. Every masonry house there was in ruins. Coconut groves were destroyed by defoliants. Villagers were arrested by U.S. troops, beaten by interrogators, and sent off to prison camps. The MACV location plots for B-52s show that the target center for one raid

was precisely on the village of Loung Phu, near the village of Luong Hoa where the village elder cited above reported that every house was destroyed. Pounding from the air was “relentless”. Helicopters chased and killed people working in fields. Survival was possible in deep trenches and bunkers, but even in bunkers children were killed by concussion, as noted in the *Newsweek* article.

An experienced U.S. official compared My Lai to the operations of the 9th Division:

The actions of the 9th Division in inflicting civilian casualties were worse. The sum total of what the 9th did was overwhelming. In sum, the horror was worse than My Lai. But with the 9th, the civilian casualties came in dribbles and were pieced out over a long time. And most of them were inflicted from the air and at night. Also, they were sanctioned by the command’s insistence on high body counts...The result was an inevitable outcome of the unit’s command policy.

That command policy can be traced directly back to Westmoreland and his civilian overseers, and derives immediately from the conditions of a war against a civilian population, already outlined.

On the matter of My Lai, misleadingly regarded in the West as somehow particularly evil (or perhaps, a shocking exception), Buckley also has relevant comments. The My Lai massacre was one of many that took place during Operation WHEELER WALLAWA. In this campaign, over 10,000 enemy were reported killed, including the victims of My Lai, who were listed in the official body count. Buckley writes:

An examination of that whole operation would have revealed the incident at My Lai to be a particularly gruesome application of a wider policy which had the same effect in many places at many times. Of course, the blame for that could not have been dumped on a stumblebum lieutenant. Calley was an aberration, but “Wheeler Wallawa” was not.

The real issue concerning this operation, Buckley and Shimkin cabled to the U.S. office of *Newsweek*, was not the “indiscriminate use of firepower,” as is often alleged. Rather, “it is charges of quite discriminating use—as a matter of policy, in populated areas.”

By the standards applied at the trials of Axis war criminals after World War II, the entire U.S. command and the civilian leadership would have been hanged for the execution of this policy of discriminating use of firepower. My Lai was indeed an aberration, but primarily in the matter of disclosure. Though the press concealed evidence of the massacre for over a year, the news broke through, largely because of the pressure of mass peace movement demonstrations. In the subsequent investigation by a military panel, it was discovered that a similar massacre had taken place only a few miles away at the village of My Khe. Consider the likely density of such massacres, given this accidental discovery. Proceedings against the officer in charge at My Khe were dismissed on the grounds that he had carried out a perfectly normal operation in which a village was

destroyed and its population forcibly relocated,⁵² with close to a hundred people reported killed. The panel's decision to exonerate the officer tells us all we need to know about Operation WHEELER WALLAWA, and in fact, reveals more about the Vietnam War than a dozen books.

Earl Martin, a Mennonite volunteer in Vietnam who is fluent in Vietnamese, was living in Quang Ngai city near My Lai at the time of the massacre, in close and regular contact with many Vietnamese. He writes that “the tragedy at My Lai never was talked about in Quang Ngai as it was in the United States...in the succeeding months we never once heard specific mention of My Lai from any of our friends” apart from a vague reference from a young boy. “The primary reason we heard little about My Lai,” he writes, “was that the Vietnamese were afraid to tell an American—or even another Vietnamese who might have been a secret police for the Saigon government—for fear they would be accused of being *than-cong*, Communist sympathizers.” He writes of the “tremendous pressure to cover up such atrocities,” in the Saigon zones just as in the United States, though for different reasons, and discusses other “similar killings” that he heard about only years later from villagers near Quang Ngai, for example, a massacre at Truong Khanh where some Americans were killed when they triggered a mine and in retaliation “the troops stormed the hamlet, which was occupied mostly by old people, women and children,” going from house to house, killing everyone they found, in the end, 62 villagers. The people of the village were broom makers. When they were dead, Martin was told by a friend, “the troops put the bodies on a pile, covered them with broom-straw and set them on fire.” How many other incidents of this kind took place the West will never know, and in fact does not much care.⁵³

Returning to SPEEDY EXPRESS, *Newsweek* reported that although John Paul Vann found that SPEEDY EXPRESS had alienated the population (a profound discovery), the Army command considered its work well done. After all, “the ‘land rush’ succeeded. Government troops moved into the ravaged countryside in the wake of the bombardments, set up outposts and established Saigon’s dominance of Kien Hoa”—a notable victory for “our Vietnamese.”

Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS was regarded by the Army as a “stunning success.” Lauding the Commanding General on the occasion of his promotion, General Creighton Abrams spoke of “the great admiration I have for the performance of the 9th Division and especially the superb leadership and brilliant operational concepts you have given the Division.” “You personify the military professional at his best in devotion and service to

God and country,” Abrams rhapsodized, referring specifically to the “magnificent” performance of the 9th Division, its “unparalleled and unequalled performance.” During Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS, for example. On another occasion, when awarding him the Legion of Merit, Abrams referred to George Patton III, one of the men best noted for converting “pacification” into plain massacre, as “one of my finest young commanders.”⁵⁴

While the 9th Division was at work in the field, others were doing their job at home. One well-known behavioral scientist who had long deplored the emotionalism of critics of the war and the inadequacy of their empirical data penned the following observations as Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS ground on: “The only sense in which [we have demolished the society of Vietnam] is the sense in which every modernizing country abandons reactionary traditionalism.”⁵⁵

SPEEDY EXPRESS, as noted, was unusual in that it was investigated and publicly reported, not in the fact that it occurred. Most of our information about comparable operations is derived by accident, when U.S. observers happened to make an effort to find out what had happened (the same is true of My Lai, incidentally). For this reason, something is known about U.S. operations at the same time in areas where Quaker relief groups were operating, for example, Operation BOLD MARINER in January 1969. In the course of this campaign, some 12,000 peasants (including, it seems, the remnants of My Lai) were driven from their homes in the Batangan Peninsula after having lived in caves and bunkers for months in an effort to survive constant bombardment,⁵⁶ and were then shipped to a waterless camp near Quang Ngai over which floated a banner which said, “We thank you for liberating us from communist terror.” After the population was forcibly removed, the land was levelled with artillery barrages and bombing and then cleared by “Rome Plows,” one of the most destructive weapons in the U.S. campaigns of ecocide in Vietnam. Since the dikes protecting rice paddies from the sea had been bombed, it was impossible to grow rice; rice purchased elsewhere was confiscated, according to inhabitants, since the population was regarded as sympathetic to the enemy and likely to give them rice. As of April 1971, the dike—which had been purposely destroyed to deny food to the enemy—had not been repaired. Refugees who returned lived under guard in camps surrounded by ten-foot rows of bamboo, from which they might look over the flooded paddies to the hills where their huts had been, now a ruin of bomb fragments, mines, unexploded artillery shells and B-52 craters nearly 20-feet deep.⁵⁷ All of this, just another episode in which this “modernizing country abandons reactionary traditionalism” under the guidance of its benevolent big brother.

In one of the postwar efforts to diminish the significance and scale of the U.S. war in Vietnam, historian Guenter Lewy, describing the “spectacular” results of operation SPEEDY EXPRESS, writes that “the assertion of Kevin P. Buckley of *Newsweek* that perhaps close to half of the more than 10,000 killed in Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS were noncombatants remains unsubstantiated...”⁵⁸ The assertion was not Buckley’s; he cited it from a high U.S. pacification official. But it is true that it remains “unsubstantiated,” as does the official record of 10,899 dead, which is, of course, an ugly joke, down to the last digit. The U.S. command had no idea how many people were killed by their B-52 and helicopter gunship attacks or the artillery barrage, napalm and anti-personnel weapons. Perhaps 5,000 “noncombatants” were killed, or perhaps some other number. An honest review of the matter would at least have mentioned some of what Buckley and Shimkin discovered concerning civilian casualties in their detailed investigation, and would have considered the significance of the operation, casualties aside, under the circumstances just reviewed. Lewy, however, prefers to keep to official sources, merely expressing some skepticism as to whether what he calls “the amazing results of Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS” should “be accepted at face value,” avoiding the question of what is implied by this successful operation of “pacification” in an area where South Vietnamese had successfully resisted the U.S. invasion.

5.1.4 The 43-Plus My Lais of the South Korean Mercenaries

South Korean mercenary forces were contracted for and brought into South Vietnam by the Johnson Administration in 1965, and they remained there into 1973.⁵⁹ News reports in 1965 and 1966 described these South Korean forces as “fierce” and “effective,” but only in January, 1970 was it disclosed publicly that their effectiveness rested on a policy of deliberate murder of South Vietnamese civilians. At that time it was reported that they had carried out a policy of simply shooting one of ten civilians in villages which they occupied.⁶⁰

Not until 1972, however, did the scale of South Korean civilian murders become public knowledge (although still of little interest to the mass media—these murders fall into the “constructive” category).⁶¹ Two Vietnamese-speaking Quakers, Diane and Michael Jones, carried out an intensive study of a portion of the area that had been occupied by the South Koreans for half a decade. To summarize their findings:

- (a) The South Korean “rented soldiers,” as the South Vietnamese describe them, committed a whole series of My Lai-scale massacres. Twelve separate massacres of 100 or more civilians were uncovered in the Jones’s study. These

soldiers carried out dozens of other massacres of twenty or more unarmed civilians, plus innumerable isolated killings, robberies, rapes, tortures, and devastation of land and personal property. The aggregate number of known murders by the South Koreans clearly runs into many thousands; and the Joneses examined only a part of the territory “pacified” by these “allied” forces.

- (b) The bulk of the victims of these slaughters were women, children and old people, as draft-age males had either joined the NLF, had been recruited into the Saigon army, or were in hiding.
- (c) These mass murders were carried out in part, but only in part, as reprisals for attacks on the South Korean forces or as a warning against such attacks.⁶² Briefly, the civilians of the entire area covered by the South Koreans served as hostages; if any casualties were taken by these mercenaries, as by an exploding mine, they often would go to the nearest village and shoot twenty, or 120, unarmed civilians. This policy is similar to that employed by the Nazis, but South Korean hostage murders of civilians were relatively more extensive and indiscriminating than those perpetrated by the Nazis in Western Europe during World War II.
- (d) These mass murders were carried out over an extended time period, and into 1972, with knowledge by U.S. authorities.⁶³ There is no evidence that U.S. officials made any effort to discourage this form of “pacification” or that any disciplinary action was ever taken in response to these frequent and sustained atrocities. In fact, there is reason to believe the South Korean policy of deliberate murder of civilians was not merely known and tolerated but was looked upon with favor by some U.S. authorities. Frank Baldwin, of Columbia University’s East Asia Institute, reports that the Korean policy was “an open secret in Korea for several years.” U.S. officials admitted to Baldwin that these accounts were true, “sometimes with regret, but usually with admiration.”⁶⁴
- (e) In its request for \$134 million for fiscal 1973 to support the continued presence of South Korean troops in Vietnam (raising the 1966-73 total to \$1.76 billion), the DOD pointed out to Congress that South Korean troops “protect” an important section of South Vietnam. It is a fact that South Koreans “protected” and gave “security”⁶⁵ to people in South Vietnam in precisely the Orwellian-official U.S. sense in which Nixon, Westmoreland and the pacification program in general did the same.⁶⁶

The acceptability of this form of pacification, and the now well established and consistent propensity of U.S. forces and each of their “allies”—not merely South Koreans⁶⁷—to carry out systematic acts of violence against South Vietnamese civilians, suggest that such atrocities and bloodbaths were “built in” to the U.S. effort and mission; they constituted an integral part of the task of “pacifying” a poor, virtually defenseless, but stubbornly uncooperative, foreign population.

5.1.5 Phoenix: A Case Study of Indiscriminate “Selective” Terror

With unlimited resources available for killing, one option fitfully pursued by the U.S. invaders of Vietnam—supplementing bombing, search-and-destroy and the organization of forces of mercenaries—was selective “counter-terror.”⁶⁸ If the NLF had a political infrastructure that was important to its success, and if their own terror responding to that of the Saigon political machine effectively had made a shambles of the latter, why not duplicate and better their program of selective force? By doing so we would, as in providing them with the South Koreans and the U.S. Ninth Division, help “to protect the Vietnamese people against terrorism” (to quote William Colby),⁶⁹ and thus bring “security” to the peasantry, threatened by the terror employed by their relatives among the NLF cadre.

Phoenix was a late-comer on the stage of selective counter-terror. It points up the ease with which U.S. programs were absorbed into (and added further corrupting impetus to) a system of rackets and indiscriminate torture and killings, and the willingness of the U.S. political-military bureaucracy actively to support and rationalize the most outlandish and brutal systems of terror. The defense of this degenerate program by Komer, Colby, Sullivan and other U.S. officials is also noteworthy in the quality of the rationalizations offered for U.S.-planned and financed bloodbaths.⁷⁰

The immediate predecessor⁷¹ of the Phoenix program was the Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX) programs initiated in mid-1967,⁷² under the direction of Westmoreland and Komer, and involving CIA, U.S. civilian and military personnel, and the Saigon military-intelligence-police apparatus. Early internal directives describe the Phoenix program as a U.S. effort of advice, support, and assistance to the Saigon Phung Hoang program. Later modifications delete reference to “Phoenix” and refer merely to the Saigon Phung Hoang program, in line with the approach of “keep[ing] the GVN foremost in the picture presented to its own people and the world at large.”⁷³ On March 4, 1968, the U.S. Secretary of Defense recommended that “Operation Phoenix which is targetted [sic] against the Viet Cong must be pursued more vigorously in closer

liaison with the U.S.” while “Vietnamese armed forces should be devoted to anti-infrastructure activities on a priority basis.”⁷⁴

After Westmoreland’s and Komer’s ICEX became Phoenix, the coordinated U.S.-Saigon intelligence-military-police program succeeded in “neutralizing”⁷⁵ some 84,000 “Viet Cong infrastructure,” with 21,000 killed, according to one set of reported official figures.⁷⁶ The Saigon government claims that under Phoenix, 40,994 suspected enemy civilians were killed, from its inception in August, 1968 through the middle of 1971.⁷⁷ Just who these victims were is not entirely clear to William E. Colby, former head of Civil Operations and Rural Development [sic] Support Program (CORDS), later head of the CIA and now a respected figure on the campus and community lecture circuit. Colby told a Congressional Committee that he had “never been highly satisfied with the accuracies of our intelligence efforts on the Vietcong infrastructure,” conceding that “larger numbers” than the thousand suggested to him by Congressman Reid “might have been improperly identified” as Vietcong Infrastructure in the course of Phoenix operations.⁷⁸ However, he assured the Committee that things are steadily “improving” (everyone’s favorite word), and while we have not yet reached perfect due process or comprehensive knowledge of VC Infrastructure, Phoenix has actually improved the quality of U.S.-Saigon counter-terror by its deep concern with accurate intelligence and its dedication to “stern justice.”⁷⁹ Most of the Vietnamese killed, Colby (like Sullivan) assured the Committee, were killed “as members of military units or while fighting off arrest.”⁸⁰ Conveniently these dead enemy have usually had incriminating documents on their person to permit identification. (“What they are identified from is from documents on the body after a fire fight.”)⁸¹ Thus although things are not perfect, South Vietnam is not the “pretty wild place” it was at one period “when the government was very unstable.” Though there are “unjustifiable abuses,” “in collaboration with the Vietnamese authorities we have moved to stop that sort of nonsense.”⁸²

Colby’s suggestions that intelligence concerning VC Infrastructure had improved, that such intelligence had been relevant to Phoenix operations, and that deaths had occurred mainly in combat were contradicted by substantial nonofficial testimony on the subject. The program initially was motivated by the belief that U.S. forces were developing much valuable information that was not being put to use.⁸³ Actually, much of this intelligence was unverified and unverifiable even in the best of circumstances. And Komer and his colleagues were aware of the fact that the “primary interest” of Saigon officials “is money,”⁸⁴ with the potential, therefore, that a counter-terror program using Saigon

machinery would be corrupt, indiscriminate, and ineffective, except for the “spinoff” from mass terror. Potential corruption would be further heightened under a body quota system, which was quickly installed and subsequently enlarged with specific prize money of \$11,000 offered for a live VCI and half that for a dead one. Corruption would be maximized by using dubious personnel to carry out the assassinations. And, in fact, assassinations were carried out regularly by former criminals or former Communists recruited and paid by the CIA, by CIA-directed teams drawn from ethnic minorities, U.S. military men, and Nationalist Chinese and Thai mercenaries. A U.S. IVS volunteer reports picking up two hitchhikers in the Mekong Delta, former criminals, who told him that by bringing in a few bodies now and then and collecting the bounty, they could live handsomely.⁸⁵

The quota system was applied at many levels. Michael J. Uhl, a former military intelligence (MI) officer, testified that a Phoenix MI team “measured its success...not only by its ‘body count’ and ‘kill ratio’ but by the number of CD’s [civil detainees] it had captured...All CD’s, because of this command pressure...were listed as VCI. To my knowledge, not one of these people ever freely admitted being a cadre member. And again, contrary to Colby’s statement, most of our CD’s were women and children...”⁸⁶ Quotas were also fixed for local officials in an effort to produce “results” on a wider front; and as one U.S. adviser noted, “They will meet every quota that’s established for them.”⁸⁷

Torture, a long-standing policy of the Saigon regime, was greatly encouraged by quotas and rewards for neutralizing “Vietcong Infrastructure.” A sardonic saying favored by the Saigon police was: “If they are innocent beat them until they become guilty.”⁸⁸ According to Uhl, “Not only was there no due process... but fully all detainees were brutalized and many were literally tortured.”⁸⁹ A woman interviewed by Tom Fox after her release from a Saigon interrogation center in July, 1972 claimed that more than 90% of those arrested and taken to the center were subjected to torture.⁹⁰ K. Barton Osborn, who served in a covert program of intelligence in Vietnam, not only testified to a wide variety of forms of torture used by U.S. and Saigon personnel, but also made the startling claim that “I never knew an individual to be detained as a VC suspect who ever lived through an interrogation in a year and a half, and that included quite a number of individuals.”⁹¹

By mid-1971, when the Saigon government had reported over 40,000 eliminated, the pacification program was being accelerated with “top priority” reportedly being given to neutralization of the VC political apparatus, at a reported cost of over \$1 billion to the U.S. and an undisclosed amount to the Saigon government.⁹² A rare statistic for April,

1971 reveals that in that month, of 2,000 “neutralized” more than 40 percent were assassinated.⁹³ According to British journalist Richard West, a U.S. intelligence officer assigned to the Phoenix program stated that when he arrived in his district, he was given a list of 200 names of people who were to be killed; when he left six months later, 260 had been killed, but none of those on his list.⁹⁴

In some respects the Phoenix system was biased in favor of the NLF and its cadres and against the ordinary citizen. The former were more elusive and better able to defend themselves and sometimes established a *modus vivendi* with local officials. But Phoenix was “widely used to arrest and detail [sic] non-Communist dissidents,” according to Theodore Jacqueney, a former AID and CORDS employee in Vietnam.⁹⁵ The Phoenix program also reportedly served for personal vendettas or for obtaining cash rewards for producing bodies. Meeting quotas was always possible in Free Vietnam by simply committing violence against the defenseless.

A system of terror-run-amok was facilitated by the incompetence and chronic irrelevance of the “intelligence” system that Colby claimed to be “improving” and which gave him hopes of “stern justice.” According to Michael Uhl, Colby’s claim of increasingly adequate intelligence as a basis for the huge number of Phoenix victims simply reflects Colby’s “general lack of understanding of what is actually going on in the field.”⁹⁶ According to Uhl, the MI groups in South Vietnam never had the capacity to do such a major intelligence job. “A mammoth task such as this would greatly tax even our resourceful FBI, where we have none of the vast cross-cultural problems to contend with.” In the reality of practice:

We had no way of determining the background of these sources, nor their motivation for providing American units with information. No American in the team spoke or understood Vietnamese well enough to independently debrief any “contact”....Our paid sources could easily have been either provocateurs or opportunists with a score to settle. Every information report (IR) we wrote based on our sources’ information was classified as (1) unverifiable and (2) usually reliable source. As to the first, it speaks for itself; the second, in most cases was pure rationale for the existence of the program.

The unverified and in fact unverifiable information, nevertheless, was used regularly as input to artillery strikes, harassment and interdiction fire (H & I), B52 and other air strikes, often on populated areas.⁹⁷

Osborne testified that the Phoenix bureaucracy unofficially encouraged killing on the spot rather than going through the required administrative procedure:

After all, it was a big problem that had to be dealt with expediently. This was the mentality. This carries a semi-official or semi-illegal program to the logical conclusion that I described here. It became a sterile depersonalized murder program...There was no cross-check; there was no investigation; there were no second options. And certainly not whatever official *modus operandi* had been described as a triple reporting system for verification. There was no verification and there was no discrimination.⁹⁸

The indiscriminateness of the Phoenix murders was so blatant that in 1970 one senior

AID advisor of the Danang City Advisory Group told Jacqueney that he refused ever to set foot in the Provincial Interrogation Center again, because “war crimes are going on there.”⁹⁹ A UPI report of November, 1971 cites another U.S. adviser, who claims that local officials in the Delta decided simply to kill outright 80% of their “suspects,” but U.S. advisers were able to convince them that the proportion should be reduced to 50%.¹⁰⁰ This is the “selective counter-terror” by which the United States and its clients brought “security” to the peasants.¹⁰¹

For all its lack of discrimination in selection of victims, the Phoenix program and other techniques of “pacification” were not without impact on the Southern resistance movement. In fact, they may have been so successful as to guarantee North Vietnamese dominance over the wreckage left by the U.S. war. We return to this topic in Volume II, chapter 1.

5.1.6 The Last Years of the Thieu Regime

As the war ground to a bloody end, the Saigon system of counterrevolutionary “stabilization” continued to function with new atrocities. The end product of “Vietnamization” was a centralized, corrupt, and exceptionally brutal police state. It became the ultimate satellite—the pure negative, built on anti-Communism, violence, and external sustenance. The base of the Thieu regime was a huge foreign-organized and -financed military and police apparatus; the population under its control was increasingly brutalized and “pacified” as enemy.

With U.S. “know-how” placed in the hands of the most fanatic and vicious elements of the dying order in South Vietnam, the modes and scope of torture and systematic police violence in the Thieu state reached new heights.¹⁰² Electrical and water torture, the ripping out of fingernails, enforced drinking of solutions of powdered lime, the driving of nails into prisoners’ bones (kneecaps or ankles), beatings ending in death, became *standard operating procedure* in the Thieu prisons.¹⁰³ In Quang Ngai, for example, Dr. Marjorie Nelson saw “dozens of patients who had coughed up, vomited, or urinated blood after being beaten about the chest, back and stomach.”¹⁰⁴ In another AFSC report: “A 17 year old boy, near death, had been unable to urinate for four days and was in extreme pain. After treatment by a Quaker doctor, we were informed that the prisoner had been tortured by electrical charges to his genital organs. A young girl had seizures, stared into space and exhibited symptoms of loss of memory. She said she had been forced to drink a lime solution many times while being interrogated.”¹⁰⁵

Following the release of ten students from Thieu's jails, these students put themselves on display in a college laboratory. One of them was in a state of semi-shock and was still being fed dextrose intravenously. His fingernails were blackened as a result of pins and slivers of wood being inserted under them. His hearing had been impaired by soapy water having been poured into his ears. Luu Hoang Thao, Deputy Chairman of the Van Hanh Student Association, described what happened to him after his arrest, as follows:

For the first three days, the police beat me continuously. They didn't ask me any questions or to sign anything. They just beat my knee caps and neck with their billy clubs. Then they beat me with chair legs. When a chair leg broke, they took another one. I was beaten until I was unconscious. When I regained consciousness, they beat me again. Finally, after three days, they asked me to sign a paper they had already written. They read the paper but would not let me see it. I wouldn't sign it, so they beat me some more.

They put pins under my fingernails. They attached electrodes to my ears, my tongue and my penis. They forced soapy water into my mouth, tramping on my stomach when it became bloated with water. They then hung me from the ceiling and extinguished lighted cigarettes in my nipples and penis.¹⁰⁶

In a 1972 study of the treatment of prisoners in South Vietnam, the Quaker team from Quang Ngai reported that there had been a further increase in torture in that stricken province.¹⁰⁷ Ngo Cong Duc (former Catholic deputy and president of the Saigon publishers association and now returned to Vietnam as publisher of the journal *Tin Sung*) claimed that the typical prisoner in South Vietnam "undergoes three torture sessions at the arresting agency," with the most brutal designed to force the divulgence of names.¹⁰⁸ The evidence that was streaming in from all over the Thieu state indicated that it was probably the torture capital of the world.

Under Vietnamization the previously tenuous rule of law was terminated completely; the other side of the coin was the rise and triumph of essentially unrestrained police powers to seize, imprison, and molest. We have already quoted former military intelligence officer Michael Uhl, who pointed out that large numbers of detainees, the majority women and children, were "captured" in repeated dragnet operations, "and whatever looked good in the catch, regardless of evidence, was classified as VCI... Not only was there no due process" applied to these prisoners, "fully all detainees were brutalized and many were literally tortured."¹⁰⁹ In 1972 arrests were proceeding at an estimated rate of 14,000 to 15,000 persons per month.¹¹⁰ The victims of this process had no protection in the U.S.-Thieu state, especially if they were ordinary citizens seized in countryside villages.

The breakdown of anything resembling a "legal system" was paralleled by a huge increase in the numbers of police. The National Police Force, which was only one of a dozen agencies legally authorized to make arrests, was enlarged from 16,000 in 1963, to

88,000 in 1969; under Vietnamization the numbers rose to 122,000 in 1972. Concurrently, a pervasive police-intelligence network spread throughout South Vietnam.

A police state is a prison state, and the Thieu state may have led all others (even Indonesia) in the number of political prisoners. Over 200 national prisons and hundreds of local jails in South Vietnam housed a prisoner population that many estimated at over 200,000.^{[111](#)} A great many of these prisoners were middle-of-the-road students, clergy, intellectuals, and labor leaders who showed some interest in political affairs and therefore constituted a threat to the leaders of the police state. One should add that the prisoners were drawn from that sector of the population that was more favorably treated by the U.S.-Saigon system; those beyond its reach were subjected to the full rigors of mechanized war. Under Vietnamization the Thieu government engaged in a determined effort to destroy any non-Communist opposition to its rule, largely by means of intimidation and violence. The vast repressive machinery of the Thieu regime was employed to a great extent against these center elements, which it properly regarded as threatening to its rule. The degeneration of this state was so extreme that a great many subjects of police terror were essentially “random” victims—brutalized as a matter of course once they fell into police hands (as in the dragnet seizures described by Uhl, above).

Many of the maltreated were victims of attempts at shakedowns. Staff of the American Friends Service Committee reported speaking with a young woman who had been imprisoned and tortured for rejecting the advances of an ARVN officer who had friends in the police.^{[112](#)} And many arrests had payoffs in bribes from the families of the imprisoned, solicited or offered with knowledge that these might be useful in reducing the severity of tortures to be applied.^{[113](#)}

As the threat of a political settlement became manifest in 1972-73, the repression intensified. The reason was simple. The Saigon diplomatic representative in Phnom Penh in 1959 told a reporter: “You must understand that we in Saigon are desperate men. We are a government of desperadoes.”^{[114](#)} True enough, though Diem was an authentic nationalist and relatively benign in comparison with the collaborationist regimes that followed as the U.S. intervention grew to full-scale war against rural South Vietnam where the vast majority of the population had lived. The desperation stemmed in part from the fact that, as each successive U.S. client found, terror does not build popular support, but on the contrary, generates more “Communists,” or at best leaves demoralization and apathy. More violence was always required to give the people “security”. Thus, after many years of U.S.-sponsored protective terror, Thieu acknowledged to Saigon officials in January,

1973 his continued inability to compete with the Communists *on a purely political basis*: “If we let things go the population may vote for the Communists, who know how to make propaganda.”¹¹⁵ The occasion was the signing of the peace agreements that were to establish parallel and equivalent authorities in South Vietnam (Thieu and the PRG) which were to reach a peaceful political settlement. But Thieu did not have to fear that the United States would help expedite any such arrangement. Recognizing no less than Thieu the hopelessness of political competition,¹¹⁶ the U.S. government unilaterally rescinded these provisions.

But even the *possibility* of political competition sent shivers through the Thieu government. In June, 1972 several thousand persons were arrested and shipped to Con Son island, many of them “merely relatives of political suspects” and many of them women and children.¹¹⁷ George Hunter reported that

special Branch Police swooped down on houses all over South Vietnam and arrested anyone under the remotest suspicion of being ‘left wing’...The government has a blacklist of suspects, but I understand that wives, mothers and fathers—anyone with the slimmest association with those on it are being caught in the net.¹¹⁸

Another roundup took place during the period of the threat of a Peace Agreement in October and November of 1972. On November 9, Hoang Duc Nha (Thieu’s closest adviser) announced to a group of Vietnamese journalists the seizure of over 40,000 “Communists” over the previous two-week period, thanks to a vast network of police.¹¹⁹ The mammoth scale of arrests to which Free Vietnam had been accustomed was sharply intensified, at just the time that Thieu and Nixon were theoretically readying themselves to sign an agreement committing them to a policy of national reconciliation.

After the agreements were signed, measures were taken that laid the basis for imprisonments with the potential of simple extermination—whether realized or not, it is hard to determine. In an official telegram sent by the Commander in Chief of Thieu’s police and the Saigon head of Phoenix on April 5, 1973, police and other arresting agents were advised as follows on the proper classification of detainees:

Do not use the expression “condemned communist or communist agent.” Write only: “Disturbs the peace.”¹²⁰

Disturbers of the peace might be regarded as common criminals; a Communist agent would be a political prisoner covered by the January 27th Agreement. This practice was supplemented by the reclassification of current prisoners to common-law status. For example, Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, president of the Saigon-based Women’s Committee Struggling for the Right to Live, with a law degree from Columbia University, was among those transferred to a prison for common-law criminals in Bien Hoa Province. Documents

from inside the prisons alleged that prison authorities incited common-law prisoners to provoke and even to kill reclassified political prisoners.^{[121](#)}

Another technique used by the Thieu government was the alleged release of political prisoners, not to the PRG and DRV as stipulated in the January Agreements, but at large within South Vietnam. In early February, Thieu announced the release of 40,000 prisoners, with no specifics as to names and places of release.^{[122](#)} The media failed to perceive the most significant aspect of this action, portrayed as a magnanimous act although in technical violation of the Agreements. The crucial point missed was that, by this device, prisoners who were murdered could be alleged to have been “released” and thus no longer a Thieu responsibility.^{[123](#)} Previously, families of prisoners held at Phu Quoc whose terms had expired were informed of the prisoners’ release, yet these individuals had disappeared.^{[124](#)}

Accelerated mistreatment of political prisoners was also reported as the threat of peace mounted, including further sharp reductions in the rice ration (which had already been reduced severely in January, 1972), the practice of mingling healthy prisoners with others in advanced stages of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis—another happy innovation in pacification—and direct physical violence.^{[125](#)} Jean-Pierre Debris, who had recently been released from Chi Hoa prison, wrote that “the aim of the Thieu regime is to break the prisoners physically so that they will never be able to take any part in national life again... The conditions under which thousands are held is critical and becoming more dramatic at the present time.”^{[126](#)}

Finally, reports of the direct killing of prisoners began filtering through with increased frequency. The two French prisoners released in December reported that just prior to their departure “there were massive deportations to the Paulo Condor [Con Son] camp,” the scene of numerous reported atrocities in the past. They speculated that their sudden release might have been motivated by concern that they might witness what they expected would then take place, “a liquidation operation which might begin in the prisons.”^{[127](#)} Amnesty International cited “evidence that selective elimination of opposition members had begun” in the prisons, and a report that 300 prisoners being moved from Con Son to the mainland were killed.^{[128](#)} On Sunday, March 25, NBC Monitor News transmitted a report from the Swedish office of Amnesty International that observers had sighted thousands of bodies in prison uniforms floating in the area off South Vietnam. The PRG and DRV reported a steady stream of killings and disappearances, impossible to verify but frequently specific as to place, and hardly to be ruled out in the light of processes then at work in the Thieu

state.

Although it was sometimes said that the Thieu government was “a coalition of the extreme Right” (a description by the pro-Thieu *Saigon Daily News*), this characterization was rejected by informed Vietnamese, who preferred the term “Mafia” to describe the Thieu coalition; they pointed to the huge thievery, the common involvement in the heroin trade, and the long and parasitic dependence of this tiny faction on a foreign power for survival. The repressive character of the Thieu state epitomized the long-term incapacity of the Diem regime and its increasingly militarized successors to respond to grievances except by violence. With Thieu the blend of egotism, fanatical anti-Communism and a life of professional military service under foreign sponsorship brought repression and police state violence to a new level of refinement.

The U.S. role in the police repression apparatus of the Thieu state was straightforward. In the broadest sense, the long U.S. intervention was the only reason that a Thieu-type regime could exist in the first place; more specifically, the U.S. financed, advised, provided technological improvements and afforded a public relations cover for the direct instruments of terror. From the time of Diem the United States placed great weight on the police and intelligence; the funding and advising of the prison-police-intelligence ensemble of South Vietnam began at once, as the United States entered the scene directly after the Geneva Accords of 1954. A spokesperson for AID told Congress:

AID and its predecessor agencies have supported public safety programs [essentially police] in Vietnam since 1955... AID's task has been to assist the National Police in recruiting, training and organizing a force for the maintenance of law and order.¹²⁹

AID provided police specialists to train Saigon's police and advise them at all levels, and to work in Thieu's “Public Safety” programs. Over \$100 million was spent on Public Safety in Vietnam from 1968 through 1971.¹³⁰ The Provincial Interrogation Centers, which were reported by Americans on the scene to have uniformly employed torture, were funded directly by the United States.¹³¹ The pacification programs in general, including Phoenix, were paid for by the United States, at a cost estimated conservatively at about \$5 billion for the period 1968-71.¹³² AID put more money into South Vietnamese prisons than schools, and even after the discovery and notoriety of Tiger Cages, it funded the construction of additional Tiger Cages for Con Son prison, even smaller than those already located on the island.¹³³

Advice was also continuous, extending both to general strategy and specific tactics. William Colby indicated: “The function of U.S. advice and support was to *initiate* and support a Vietnamese effort which can be taken up and maintained by the Vietnamese

alone...[and] a considerable degree of advice and support of the GVN pacification program has come from the U.S. side over the years.” In later years, in addition to Phoenix, U.S. advice and funds went toward

provision of commodity and advisory support for a police force of 108,000 men by the end of Fiscal 1971;... assisting the National Identity Registration Program (N.I.R.P.) to register more than 12,000,000 persons 15 years of age and over by the end of 1971; continuing to provide basic and specialized training for approximately 40,000 police annually; providing technical assistance to the police detention system, including planning and supervision of the construction of facilities for an additional 8,000 inmates during 1970; and helping to achieve a major increase in the number of police presently working at the village level.¹³⁵

Advice included the introduction of Western technology to improve Third World “security”. Some examples are mentioned in the AID statement quoted above. Another illustration was provided by a former prisoner in the Con Son Tiger Cages, who reported on the ingenuity of U.S. advisers in improving the technique of torture.¹³⁶

It is not in question that the United States played the decisive role in the evolution of South Vietnamese political life from 1955-75. U.S. authorities did not merely accommodate to events thrust upon them from the outside; as adviser, controller of the purse strings, and occupying power, the United States had critical leverage, which it exercised time and again to make specific choices. The character of the Thieu regime reflected a series of consistent decisions made in Washington, and expressed a preference and choice as to the nature of a client state that is not confined to South Vietnam. The Saigon authorities, in general, went along with U.S. advice, partly because of their proclivities, partly because they were dependents, but also because each new policy innovation meant an additional inflow of cash which the Saigon leadership knew could be absorbed readily into the existing system of corruption.

In addition to funding, advising and providing the equipment and know-how, the United States provided a moral cover for the Thieu state. This resulted in part from the fact that the United States is a democracy; its officials pretend that democracy and an open society are among its serious objectives in intervening. Thus moderate scholars and others determined to think well of the United States have found it possible to employ the argument from long-run benefit. This mystification was furthered by the constant reference of U.S. officials to “encouraging developments” in their client police states, and to the fact of “our working with the Vietnamese government,” which is making “very substantial strides” toward eliminating the unjustifiable abuses that we all recognize and are doing our level best to eradicate.¹³⁷

The apologetics include more or less continuous lying, especially at the higher levels of officialdom, as when Colby and Sullivan suggested that many of the 21,000 or 41,000

killings under Phoenix might be combat deaths. Or in Colby's constant reference to pacification as a program for the "defense of the people" against somebody else's terror. Or the statement of Randolph Berkeley, chief of the Corrections and Detention Division of AID: "Generally speaking we have found the Vietnamese very light in their punishment."¹³⁸ Or the statement of Frank E. Walton, Director of the AID Public Safety Program, that Con Son prison is "like a Boy Scout Recreational Camp."¹³⁹ The same Frank Walton who denied any knowledge of the Tiger Cages in 1970 signed a report dated October 1, 1963, which stated that:

In Con Son II, some of the hardcore communists keep preaching the 'party' line, so these 'Reds' are sent to the Tiger Cages in Con Son I where they are isolated from all others for months at a time. This confinement may also include rice without salt and water—the United States prisons' equivalent of bread and water. It may include immobilization—the prisoner is bolted to the floor, handcuffed to a bar or rod, or leg irons with the chain through an eyebolt, or around a bar or rod.¹⁴⁰

The Paris Agreements of January, 1973 brought no reprieve to the suffering people of South Vietnam. As already noted, the United States announced at once that it would disregard the central provisos of the Agreements it had signed in Paris and proceeded to do so, a fact effectively concealed by the press. (See Volume II, chapter 1). The Thieu Regime, as always a creature of the United States, persisted in the sole program that it was equipped to conduct: violence and terror. The evidence is voluminous. We will give only one illustrative example as the appendix to this chapter, a discussion of the activities of the U.S.-Thieu regime after the January, 1973 ceasefire, presented by two U.S. relief workers in Quang Ngai Province. In the next volume, we will turn to the subsequent history. Here we only emphasize the obvious: the many years of U.S. savagery in South Vietnam devastated the land, tore the society to tatters, decimated both the popular resistance and the non-Communist opposition, and left a legacy of horror that may never be overcome and will certainly have bitter consequences for many years, long after the true story of the U.S. war has been excised from history and safely forgotten in the West. But those elements in United States society and political life that could impose such suffering on South Vietnam and the rest of Indochina will not hesitate to organize another constructive bloodbath if needed to save people elsewhere from any foolish attempt to exit from the Free World.

5.2 Nefarious and Mythical Bloodbaths

5.2.1 Revolutionary Terror in Theory and Practice

The Vietnamese revolutionaries shed considerable blood over the years in individual acts of terror, some deliberate and calculated, others reflecting sporadic breakdowns in the

discipline of cadres under enormous pressure, along with occasional sheer vengeance killing. There are very few authenticated cases, however, in which the insurgents killed significant numbers of unarmed civilians in deliberate acts of mass murder.¹⁴¹ This appears to have been a result of a long-standing revolutionary philosophy and strategy, their relationship to the underlying population and superior discipline.

Despite the widely held belief to the contrary, a product of decades of officially inspired propaganda, the Vietnamese revolutionary movement always gave force and violence a lower rating in the spectrum of *means* than did the Diem government and its successors or their U.S. sponsors. This was in close accord with classical Maoist principles of revolutionary organization, strategy and behavior. The NLF view in early 1960 was:

Armed activities only fulfill a supporting role for the political struggle movement. It is impossible to substitute armed forces and armed struggle for political forces and political struggle. Formerly we erred in slighting the role of armed activity. Today we must push armed activity to the right degree, but at the same time we must not abuse or rely excessively on armed activity.¹⁴²

Douglas Pike, the official United States government authority on the NLF, confirmed the great weight given by it to the political struggle as opposed to “violence”:

It maintained that its contest with the GVN and the United States should be fought out at the political level and that the use of massed military might was itself illegitimate. Thus one of the NLF’s unspoken, and largely unsuccessful, purposes was to use the struggle movement before the onlooking world to force the GVN and the United States to play the game according to its rules: The battle was to be organizational or quasi-political, the battleground was to be the minds and loyalties of the rural Vietnamese, the weapons were to be ideas;... and all force was automatically condemned as terror or repression.¹⁴³

The United States and the Diem regime would not play by the rules of any such game, and as Pike states, in the end “armed combat was a GVN-imposed requirement; the NLF was obliged to use counterforce to survive.”¹⁴⁴

According to Jeffrey Race, before 1960 the South Vietnamese revolutionaries carried out an official policy of “non-violence” which led to a serious decimation of their ranks, as violence was monopolized almost entirely by the U.S.-sponsored Diem regime. Race contends:

By adopting an almost entirely defensive role during this period and by allowing the government to be the first to employ violence, the Party—at great cost—allowed the government to pursue the conflict in increasingly violent terms, through its relentless reprisal against any opposition, its use of torture, and particularly after May 1959, through the psychological impact in the rural areas of the proclamation of Law 10/59.¹⁴⁵

The idea that the success of the Vietnam revolutionaries was based on “terrorizing” the population is shown by Race to be a serious misperception; in fact, it was the Saigon government, sponsored and advised by the United States, that in the end helped destroy itself by its inability to respond to problems and threats except by terror. Race’s discussion

is worth quoting at length:

The lessons of Long An are that violence can destroy, but cannot build; violence may explain the cooperation of a few individuals, but it cannot explain the cooperation of a whole social class, for this would involve us in the contradiction of “Who is to coerce the coercers?” Such logic leads inevitably to the absurd picture of the revolutionary leader in his jungle base, “coercing” millions of terrorized individuals throughout the country.¹⁴⁶ ...The history of events in Long An also indicates that violence will work against the user, unless he has already preempted a large part of the population and then limits his acts of violence to a sharply defined minority. In fact, this is exactly what happened in the case of the government: far from being bound by any commitments to legality or humane principles, the government terrorized far more than did the revolutionary movement...[and] *it was just these tactics that led to the constantly increasing strength of the revolutionary movement in Long An from 1960 to 1965.*¹⁴⁷

Race indicates that official Communist executions “actually were the consequence of extensive investigation and approval by higher authority.” Furthermore, many careless executions during the resistance prior to 1954 had had adverse effects on the Party, so that after it became stronger it “exercised much tighter control over the procedures for approving executions...”¹⁴⁸ This concern for the secondary effects of unjust executions sharply contrasted with the policies of the Saigon regimes under U.S. sponsorship, and even more with the policies of the United States itself from 1965-75.

Race’s study shows how the Communist Party’s refusal to authorize violence “except in limited circumstances...even in self-defense, against the increasing repressiveness of the government,” while at the same time it was gaining support through its constructive programs, gave rise to an “anomaly”; “the revolutionary organization [was] being ground down while the revolutionary potential was increasing.”¹⁴⁹ In response to angry demands from southern Party members who were being decimated by U.S.-Diem terror, a May 1959 decision in Hanoi authorized the use of violence to support the political struggle.¹⁵⁰ From this point on the threat of terror was “equalized” and violence was no longer a government monopoly. In the province near Saigon that Race studied intensively (Long An), the result was that the revolutionary forces quickly became dominant while the government apparatus and its armed forces dissolved without violent conflict, undermined by Party propaganda and disappearing from the scene.¹⁵¹ The revolutionary potential had become a reality. By late 1964 parts of the province were declared a free strike zone and by early 1965, when the full-scale U.S. invasion took place, “revolutionary forces had gained victory in nearly all the rural areas of Long An.”¹⁵² As for the “North Vietnamese aggressors,” their first units entered the province at the time of the 1968 Tet offensive.¹⁵³

Revolutionary success in Vietnam both in theory and practice was based primarily on understanding and trying to meet the needs of the masses. Race noted that government officials were aware of the fact that “communist cadres are close to the people, while ours

are not.”¹⁵⁴ Yet they appeared to be unaware of the reasons, which he believes were traceable to a recruitment pattern for government office that systematically “denied advancement to those from majority elements of the rural population.” The reasons also were related to a total failure on the part of the government to meet the real needs of the rural masses, in contrast with the revolutionary forces who “offered concrete and practical solutions to the daily problems of substantial segments of the rural population...”¹⁵⁵ A movement geared to winning support from the rural masses is not likely to resort to bloodbaths among the rural population. A government recruiting wholly from an elite minority centered in the cities and admittedly “out of touch” with its own people, dependent on a foreign power for its existence and sustenance, generously supplied with weapons of mass destruction by its foreign sponsor—this type of government could well be expected to try to “pacify” its own people and to rely on its foreign protector to do so more effectively, while both speak of their objective as “protecting” the rural masses from “revolutionary terror.”

Numerous cases of atrocities have been attributed to the NLF or DRV,¹⁵⁶ and several were nurtured by U.S. government propaganda as cornerstones of the justification for United States intervention. We focus briefly on the two most important mythical bloodbaths:¹⁵⁷ that associated with the North Vietnamese land reform of the mid-1950s, and the Hue massacres of 1968.

5.2.2 Land Reform in the Mid-Fifties

In an address on November 3, 1969, President Nixon spoke of the DRV Communists having murdered more than 50,000 people following their takeover in the North in the 1950s. Six months later, in a speech given on April 30, 1970 he raised the ante to “hundreds of thousands” who had been exposed in 1954 to the “slaughter and savagery” of the DRV leadership. Then, one week later, on May 8, 1970, apparently in some panic at the public’s response to his invasion of Cambodia, Mr. Nixon invoked the image of “millions” of civilians who would be massacred if the North Vietnamese were ever to descend into South Vietnam. Subsequently, in the calm of a press interview on April 16, 1971, President Nixon reported that “a half a million, by conservative estimates...were murdered or otherwise exterminated by the North Vietnamese.”

It is obvious that a credibility problem exists with periodic variations in numbers of alleged victims, but there are three elements in this particular bloodbath myth worthy of discussion. First, whatever the numbers involved in the DRV land reform abuses, they had little or nothing to do with retaliatory action for collaboration with the French. Even in the

sources relied on by official propagandists, the intended victims were identified primarily as landlords being punished for alleged past offenses against their dependent tenants, rather than wartime collaborators. Thus the attempts to use this episode as proof of a probable bloodbath in retaliation for collaboration with the U.S. or noncooperation during the continuing fighting was somewhat strained.

Second, the North Vietnamese leadership was upset by the abuses in the land reform, publicly acknowledged its errors, punished many officials who had carried out or permitted injustices, and implemented administrative reforms to prevent recurrences. In brief, the DRV leadership showed a capacity to respond to abuses and keep in touch with rural interests and needs.¹⁵⁸ It was a “bitter truth” for Professor Samuel Huntington that the “relative political stability” of North Vietnam, in contrast with the South, rested on the fact that “the organization of the Communist party reaches out into the rural areas and provides a channel for communication of rural grievances to the center and for control of the countryside by the government.”¹⁵⁹ What Huntington missed is that the DRV and NLF leadership were not prevented by class interest, as were the successive regimes in Saigon, from responding constructively to rural grievances. In the South, as Jeffrey Race points out, even when the reactionary elites came into possession of captured documents that stressed rural grievances which the insurgents felt they could capitalize on (and for which *they* offered programs) “the government did not develop appropriate policies to head off the exploitation of the issues enumerated in the document.”¹⁶⁰

Third, and perhaps most important for present purposes, the basic sources for the larger estimates of killings in the North Vietnamese land reform were persons affiliated with the CIA or the Saigon Propaganda Ministry. According to a Vietnamese Catholic now living in France, Colonel Nguyen Van Chau, head of the Central Psychological War Service for the Saigon Army from 1956 to 1962, the “bloodbath” figures for the land reform were “100% fabricated” by the intelligence services of Saigon. According to Colonel Chau, a systematic campaign of vilification by the use of forged documents was carried out during the mid-1950s to justify Diem’s refusal to negotiate with Hanoi in preparation for the unheld unifying elections originally scheduled for 1956. According to Chau the forging of documents was assisted by U.S. and British intelligence agencies, who helped gather authentic documents that permitted a plausible foundation to be laid for the forgeries, which “were distributed to various political groups and to groups of writers and artists, who used the false documents to carry out the propaganda campaign.”¹⁶¹

The primary source of information on the land reform for many years was the work of

Hoang Van Chi, formerly a substantial landholder in North Vietnam, and employed and subsidized by the Saigon Ministry of Information, CIA, and other official U.S. sources for many years.¹⁶² D. Gareth Porter undertook the first close analysis of his work and demonstrated that Chi's conclusions were based on a series of falsehoods, nonexistent documents, and slanted and deceptive translations of real documents. For example, Chi stated that the DRV authorities fixed a minimum quota of three landlords to be *executed* in each village, when in fact they placed an *upper* limit of three who could be *denounced and tried*, not executed.¹⁶³ In another passage Chi quotes Giap as saying, "Worse still, torture came to be regarded as normal practice during Party reorganization," when in fact Giap actually said: "Even coercion was used in carrying out party reorganization." Other passages cited by Chi as evidence of a plan for a "deliberate excess of terror" were shown by Porter to be "simply cases of slanted translation for a propaganda purpose."¹⁶⁴

His estimate of 700,000, or 5% of the population of North Vietnam, as victims of the land reform, Chi eventually conceded to be merely a "guess," based largely on experience in his own village where ten of 200 persons died, although only one was literally executed.¹⁶⁵ This admission came after Porter had made Chi's falsifications public. Given Chi's proven willingness to lie, his figure of ten deaths attributable to the land reform can hardly be taken at face value, but his extrapolation of this sample to the entirety of North Vietnam, which even Chi explicitly recognized as nonhomogeneous, is not even worth discussing.¹⁶⁶ Although scientifically worthless, and surely fabricated for propaganda purposes, Chi's "guess" served well for many years in providing authoritative and "conservative" estimates, not only for political leaders and their media conduits, but even for serious students of the war. Bernard Fall was taken in by Chi, and Frances FitzGerald in her influential *Fire in the Lake* followed Fall in giving a "conservative estimate" that "some fifty thousand people of all economic stations were killed" in the course of the land reform.¹⁶⁷ Because of their reputations as opponents of the war, Fall and FitzGerald played an especially important role in the perpetration of a myth that still flourishes in its third decade of life.¹⁶⁸

On the basis of an analysis of official figures and credible documents, plus an estimate made by the Diem government itself in 1959, Porter concluded that a realistic range of executions taking place during the land reform would be between 800 and 2500.¹⁶⁹

The North Vietnamese land reform has been subjected to a more recent and exhaustive study by Edwin E. Moise.¹⁷⁰ To Porter's "negative" argument, based largely on his demonstration that "the documentary evidence for the bloodbath theory seems to have

been a fabrication almost in its entirety,” Moise adds “some positive evidence”: namely, he points out that Saigon propaganda contained little about land reform until Saigon had learned from international press agency dispatches in 1956 of the North Vietnamese discussions of errors and failures. Even Hoang Van Chi, in 1955 interviews, did not make any accusations about atrocities; “It was only in later years that his memories began to alter,” that is after the United States and the Saigon regime learned about the land reform problems from the discussion in the Hanoi press, which, Moise writes, was “extremely informative” and “sometimes extraordinarily candid in discussing errors and failures.” After a detailed discussion of sources, Moise concludes that “allowing for these uncertainties, it seems reasonable to estimate that the total number of people executed during the land reform was probably in the vicinity of 5,000, and almost certainly between 3,000 and 15,000, and that the slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent victims, often described in anti-Communist propaganda, never took place.” These victims, Moise concludes, were not killed in the course of a government program of retribution and murder but rather were victims of “paranoid distrust of the exploiting classes,” lack of experience on the part of poorly-trained cadres, and the problems inherent in attempting to engage poor peasants and agricultural workers directly in a leadership role. “One of the most extraordinary things about the land reform,” he writes, “was the fact that its errors were not covered up, or blamed on a few scapegoats, after it was over,” but were publicly admitted by the government and party which “corrected them to the extent possible.” “Economically, the land reform had succeeded”; land was given to peasants who lacked it and agricultural production rose rapidly, overcoming the severe food shortages and famine of earlier years, and thus saving many lives. Subsequent steps towards cooperatives proceeded “without any significant amount of violence,” largely on the basis of persuasion.

However one may choose to evaluate these efforts at social reform in the countryside under harsh conditions and in the aftermath of a bitter war, the picture is radically different from what has filtered through journalism and scholarship to the Western reader and continues to be repeated today as proof of Communist barbarism. We might point out, finally, that the indiscriminate massacre in the single operation SPEEDY EXPRESS claimed as many victims as the land reform that has served U.S. propaganda for so many years, and that the perpetrators of this massacre, which was quite clearly a direct expression of high level policy aimed at systematic destruction and murder, were not punished or condemned but rather were honored for their crimes.

5.2.3 The Hue Massacre of 1968

The essential claim of the myth of the Hue massacre (see note 157) is that during their month-long occupation of Hue at the time of the Tet Offensive of 1968, NLF and North Vietnamese forces deliberately, according to an advance plan and “blacklist,” rounded up and murdered thousands of civilians, either because they worked for the government or represented “class enemies.” The basic documentation supporting the myth consists of a report issued by the Saigon government in April 1968, a captured document made public by the U.S. Mission in November 1969, and a long analysis published in 1970 by USIS employee Douglas Pike. Both the Saigon and Pike reports should have aroused suspicions on the basis of their source, their tone, and their role in an extended propaganda campaign, timed in the latter case to reduce the impact of the My Lai massacre. But, even more important, the substance of these documents does not withstand scrutiny.¹⁷¹

As in the case of the land reform bloodbath myth just discussed, official estimates of alleged NLF-DRV killings of civilians at Hue escalated sharply in response to domestic political contingencies, in this case, in the fall of 1969, coincident with the Nixon administration’s attempt to offset the effects of the October and November surge of organized peace activity and to counteract the exposure of the My Lai massacre in November 1969. Shortly after the Tet offensive itself, Police Chief Doan Cong Lap of Hue estimated the number of NLF-DRV killings at about 200,¹⁷² and the mass grave of local officials and prominent citizens allegedly found by the Mayor of Hue contained 300 bodies. (The authenticity of these numbers and responsibility for these bodies is debatable, as is discussed below.) In a report issued in late April 1968 by the propaganda arm of the Saigon government, it was claimed that about one thousand executions had been carried out by the Communists in and around Hue, and that nearly half of the victims had been buried alive. Since the story was ignored, the U.S. embassy put out the same report the following week, and this time it was headlined in U.S. papers. The story was not questioned, despite the fact that no Western journalist had ever been taken to see the grave sites when the bodies were uncovered. On the contrary, French photographer Marc Riboud was repeatedly denied permission to see one of the sites where the Province Chief claimed 300 civilian government workers had been executed by the Communists. When he was finally taken by helicopter to the alleged site, the pilot refused to land, claiming the area was “insecure.”¹⁷³

AFSC staff people in Hue were also unable to confirm the reports of mass graves, though they reported many civilians shot and killed during the reconquest of the city.¹⁷⁴

Len Ackland, an IVS worker in Hue in 1967 who returned in April 1968 to investigate,

was informed by U.S. and Vietnamese officials that about 700 Vietnamese were killed by the Viet Cong, an estimate generally supported by his detailed investigations, which also indicate that the killings were primarily by local NLF forces during the last stages of the bloody month-long battle as they were retreating.¹⁷⁵ Richard West, who was in Hue shortly after the battle, estimated “several hundred Vietnamese and a handful of foreigners” killed by Communists and speculated that victims of My Lai-style massacres by the U.S.-ARVN forces might have been among those buried in the mass graves.¹⁷⁶

In the fall of 1969 a “captured document” was discovered that had been mysteriously sitting unnoticed in the official files for 19 months, in which the enemy allegedly “admitted” having killed 2,748 persons during the Hue campaign. This document is the main foundation on which the myth of the Hue massacre was constructed. At the time it was released to the press, in November 1969, Douglas Pike was in Saigon to push the Hue massacre story, at the request of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. Pike, an expert media manipulator, recognized that American reporters love “documents,” so he produced documents. He also knew that virtually none of these journalists understood Vietnamese, so that documents could be translated and reconstructed to conform with the requirements of a massacre. He also knew that few journalists would challenge his veracity and independently assess and develop evidence, despite the long record of official duplicity on Vietnam and the coincidence of this new document with official public relations needs of the moment¹⁷⁷ —the My Lai story had broken, and organized peace activity in the fall of 1969 was intense. Pike was correct on this point also, and the few indications of skepticism by foreign reporters were not allowed to interfere with the institutionalization of the official version.

The newly captured document and its interpretation by a well-known official propagandist were thus promptly accepted without question by many reporters (e.g., Don Oberdorfer, in his book *Tet*). Frances FitzGerald swallowed completely the official tale that “the Front and the North Vietnamese forces murdered some three thousand civilians” in their month of terror at Hue in 1968, and she took at face value all Saigon allegations of grave findings as well as the “piecing [of] various bits of evidence together” by Douglas Pike.¹⁷⁸ In the hysterical propaganda effusions of Robert Thompson, the number of people executed by the Communists was escalated to 5,700, and we learn that “in captured documents they gloated over these figures and only complained that they had not killed enough.”¹⁷⁹ No documents were identified, nor was any explanation advanced for such odd behavior. Senator William Saxbe insisted on no less than 7,000 murdered by “North

Vietnamese,” considerably more than the total number reported killed from all causes during this period in Hue (*Congressional Record*, May 3, 1972).

Thus, in the fall of 1969 the press in general once again headlined the refurbished story, quoting from the captured document: “We eliminated 1,892 administrative personnel, 39 policemen, 790 tyrants, 6 captains, 2 first lieutenants, 20 second lieutenants and many noncommissioned officers.” This sentence and document were accepted as confirmation of the U.S.-Saigon version of what had taken place, despite the fact that nowhere in the document is it claimed or even suggested that any civilians had been *executed*. Furthermore, the quoted sentence was taken out of the context of the document as a whole, which had nothing to do with the punishment of individuals, but was rather a low-level report, describing the military victory of the NLF in a particular district of Hue. But the press was too interested in reaffirming the cruelty of the Viet Cong to pay attention to such fine distinctions.

In manipulating this document for propaganda purposes, the Vietnamese word “diet” was translated as “eliminate,” which implies killing, although the word was used by the NLF in the military sense of putting out of action (killing, wounding, capturing, or inducing to surrender or defect). If the NLF had intended to describe plain killing or deliberate executions, they would have used any number of Vietnamese terms, but not “diet”. The government propaganda version also disregarded the fact that the 2748 figure clearly included estimated numbers of enemy troops killed and wounded in combat. This deception was facilitated by mistranslating the word “te” as “administrative personnel” in the version circulated to journalists when, in fact, according to a standard North Vietnamese dictionary it has the broader meaning of “puppet personnel,” which would include both civilian administrators and the military. The propaganda operation also produced a list of fifteen categories of “enemies of the people” allegedly targeted for liquidation, when the documents in question never used the quoted phrase and suggested only that those categories of people should be carefully “watched”. Those targeted for repression, let alone liquidation, were in completely different categories.¹⁸⁰ Finally, it was claimed that the NLF had blacklists for execution which included “selected non-official and natural leaders of the community, chiefly educators and religionists,” when in fact the testimony of Hue’s chief of secret police contradicts this. According to the latter, the only names on the list of those to be executed immediately were the officers of the secret police of Hue. Other lists were of those who were to be “reeducated”.¹⁸¹ Porter states that no captured document has yet been produced which suggests that the NLF and DRV had any

intention of executing any civilians. Porter claims further that the general strategy of the NLF conveyed in the documents, and misrepresented by Douglas Pike and his associates, was to try to mobilize and gain support from the masses, organized religious groups, and even ordinary policemen.¹⁸²

The documents uniformly attest to an NLF policy of attempting to rally large numbers with minimum reprisals. Furthermore, the killings that did take place occurred after the NLF realized that it would have to evacuate the city, then under a massive U.S. attack, and during that evacuation. In Porter's words:

The real lesson of Hue, therefore, is that in circumstances of peace and full political control, the basic Communist policy toward those associated with the Saigon regime would be one of no reprisals, with the exception of key personnel in Saigon's repressive apparatus (and even in these cases, officials can redeem themselves at the last moment by abandoning resistance to the revolutionary forces).¹⁸³

This lesson, the opposite of that which the U.S.-Saigon propaganda machines succeeded in conveying, gains plausibility in view of the events of postwar Vietnam (see volume II, chapters 1 and 4). There is no credible evidence that the behavior of the victors resembles that of the gloating butchers who "only complained that they had not killed enough." In fact, the long-predicted bloodbath in Vietnam did not materialize.

Apart from the "captured documents," the most persuasive support for the alleged massacre came from the finding of mass graves—but this evidence is as unconvincing as the managed documents. A fundamental difficulty arises from the fact that large numbers of civilians were killed in the U.S.-Saigon recapture of Hue by the massive and indiscriminate use of firepower. David Douglas Duncan, the famous combat photographer, said of the recapture that it was a "total effort to root out and kill every enemy soldier. The mind reels at the carnage, cost and ruthlessness of it all."¹⁸⁴ Another distinguished photographer, Philip Jones Griffiths, wrote that most of the victims "were killed by the most hysterical use of American firepower ever seen" and were then designated "as the victims of a Communist massacre."¹⁸⁵ Robert Shaplen wrote at the time: "Nothing I saw during the Korean War, or in the Vietnam War so far has been as terrible, in terms of destruction and despair, as what I saw in Hue."¹⁸⁶ Of Hue's 17,134 houses, 9,776 were completely destroyed and 3,169 more were officially classified as "seriously damaged." The initial official South Vietnamese estimate of the number of civilians killed in the fighting during the bloody reconquest was 3,776.¹⁸⁷ Townsend Hoopes, Undersecretary of the Air Force at the time, stated that in the recapture effort 80% of the buildings were reduced to rubble, and that "in the smashed ruins lay 2,000 dead civilians..."¹⁸⁸ The Hoopes and Saigon numbers exceed the highest estimates of NLF-DRV killings, including

official ones, that are not demonstrable propaganda fabrications. According to Oberdorfer, the U.S. Marines put “Communist losses” at more than 5,000, while Hoopes states that the city was captured by a Communist force of 1,000, many of whom escaped—suggesting again that most of those killed were civilian victims of U.S. firepower.

Some of the civilian casualties of this U.S. assault were buried in mass graves by NLF personnel alongside their own casualties (according to NLF-DRV sources), and a large number of civilians were bulldozed into mass graves by the “allies”.¹⁸⁹ The NLF claim to have buried 2,000 victims of the bombardment in mass graves.¹⁹⁰ Oberdorfer says that 2,800 “victims of the occupation” were discovered in mass graves, but he gives no reason for believing that these were victims of the NLF-DRV “political slaughter” rather than people killed in the U.S. bombardment. He seems to have relied entirely on the assertions of the Ministries of Propaganda. Fox Butterfield, in the *New York Times* of 11 April 1975, even places all 3,000 bodies in a single grave! Samuel A. Adams, a former analyst with the CIA, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* of March 26, 1975, that “South Vietnamese and Communist estimates of the dead coincide almost exactly. Saigon says it dug up some 2,800 bodies; a Viet Cong police report puts the number at about 3,000.” There are no known “police reports” that say any such thing; and it apparently never occurred to Adams that the 2,800 figure might have been adjusted to the needs of the mistranslated document.

An interesting feature of the mass graves, as noted earlier, is that independent journalists were never allowed to be present at their opening, and that they had difficulty locating their precise whereabouts despite repeated requests.¹⁹¹ One of the authors spoke with a United States Marine present at the first publicized grand opening, who claims that the reporters present were carefully hand-picked reliables, that the bodies were not available for inspection, and that he observed tracks and scour marks indicative of the use of bulldozers (which the DRV and NLF did not possess).¹⁹² Perhaps the only Western physician to have examined the graves, the Canadian Dr. Alje Vennema, found that the number of victims in the grave sites he examined were inflated in the U.S.-Saigon count by over sevenfold, totaling only 68 instead of the officially claimed 477; that most of them had wounds and appeared to be victims of the fighting, and that most of the bodies he saw were clothed in military uniforms.¹⁹³

Little attention has been paid to the possibility that massacre victims at Hue may have been killed neither by the NLF-DRV nor U.S. firepower, but rather by the returning Saigon military and political police. Many NLF sympathizers “surfaced” during the Tet offensive, cooperated in the provisional government formed by the revolutionaries in Hue,

or otherwise revealed their support for the NLF. With the retreat of the NLF and DRV forces from Hue in 1968 many cadres and supporters were left in a vulnerable position as potential victims of Saigon retribution. Evidence has come to light that large-scale retaliatory killing may have taken place in Hue by the Saigon forces *after* its recapture. In a graphic description, Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, citing a French priest from Hue, concluded that: “Altogether, there have been 1,100 killed [after ‘liberation’ by Saigon forces]. Mostly students, university teachers, priests. Intellectuals and religious people at Hue have never hidden their sympathy for the NLF.”¹⁹⁴

One of the U.S. reporters who entered Hue immediately after the U.S. Marines had recaptured part of it was John Lengel of AP. He filed a report on February 10 concerned primarily with the extensive war damage, and then added the following intriguing comment:

But few seasoned observers see the devastation of Hue backfiring on the communists. They see as the greatest hope a massive and instant program of restoration underlined by a careful psychological warfare program pinning the blame on the communists.

It is hard, however, to imagine expertise on such a broad scale in this land.¹⁹⁵

It seems quite possible that the “seasoned observers” whom Lengel cites gave the matter some further thought, and that contrary to his speculation, there was sufficient psywar expertise to manage the media—never very difficult for the government—and to “pin the blame on the communists.” That seems, at least, a very reasonable speculation given the information now available, and one that gains credibility from the early reaction of “seasoned observers” to the havoc wrought by the U.S. forces reconquering the city.

In any case, given the very confused state of events and evidence plus the total unreliability of U.S.-Saigon “proofs,” at a minimum it can be said that the NLF-DRV “bloodbath” at Hue was constructed on flimsy evidence indeed. It seems quite likely that U.S. firepower “saving” the Vietnamese killed many more civilians than did the NLF and DRV. It is also not unlikely that political killings by the Saigon authorities exceeded any massacres by the NLF and DRV at Hue. Porter’s analysis of the NLF documents used by U.S.-Saigon propagandists suggests that mass political killings were neither contemplated nor consistent with revolutionary strategy at Hue. The evidence indicates that “the vast majority of policemen, civil servants, and soldiers were initially on ‘reeducation’ rather than on liquidation lists, but the number of killings mounted as the military pressure on the NLF and North Vietnamese mounted.”¹⁹⁶ It is also of interest here, as in the land reform case, that the retreating Front forces “were severely criticized by their superiors for excesses which ‘hurt the revolution’.”¹⁹⁷ We have not yet heard of any such self-criticism

coming from U.S. and Saigon superiors for their more extensive killings at Hue.

As noted earlier, the apparent absence of retributory killings in postwar Vietnam is suggestive of where the truth may lie on the question of the Hue massacre. The Pike-Thompson version led to forecasts which have been refuted by history. Nonetheless the force of the U.S. propaganda machine and U.S. influence are such that the Hue massacre (by the Communists!) is still an institutionalized truth, not only in the United States but overseas as well. For example, Michel Tatu of *Le Monde* has taken the Pike version as established truth. And in his letter proposing Sakharov for the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn also refers to “the bestial mass killing in Hue” as “reliably proved”—and we can be sure he is not referring to the nearly 4,000 civilians mentioned by the Saigon authorities themselves, most of whom were buried in the rubble created by U.S. firepower.

We have discussed several of the more blatant exercises of the U.S.-Saigon propaganda machines, but it must be emphasized that even their day-to-day reports, which constituted the great mass of information about Indochina, should have been treated with comparable skepticism. On the rare occasions when competent reporters made serious investigations, the information presented by U.S. and Saigon sources turned out to be no less tainted. The Japanese reporter Katsuichi Honda once undertook to investigate the weekly report of the General Information Bureau of the U.S. Army in Saigon entitled “Terrorist Activities by Viet Cong.” Pursuing “one isolated case” that interested him, he discovered

that not only was amazingly brutal and persistent terrorism occurring regularly, it was actually being shielded from public scrutiny by Saigon’s “information control.” It soon appeared that the murders were not done by the National Liberation Front at all. There were, it seemed, innumerable “terrible facts” which had been secretly hushed up behind the scenes of the intensifying Vietnam War.^{[198](#)}

In the case in question, he discovered that the assassination of five Buddhist student volunteers, officially victims of Viet Cong terror, had apparently been carried out by government forces. In another case, “drunken soldiers of the Government army quarreling among themselves threw grenades, and some civilian bystanders were killed,” the case again being reported “as another instance of ‘Viet Cong terrorism’.”

In other cases, the facts have emerged only by accident. To mention one particularly grotesque example, the camp where the remnants of the My Lai massacre had been relocated was largely destroyed by ARVN air and artillery bombardment in the spring of 1972. The destruction was attributed routinely to Viet Cong terror. The truth was revealed by Quaker service workers in the area.^{[199](#)}

These examples point up the fact that in the instances in question the official reports

were lies and deceptions, and in some cases were converted into official myths; the more important conclusion is that official sources in general have extremely limited credibility. They raise questions, but provide no reliable answers.

Appendix: Indochina—Quang Ngai Province Five Months After the Peace Agreement: Arrests, Tortures, Artillery Fire Continue as Before the Ceasefire, by Jane and David Barton

[Jane and David Barton had worked for two years in the hospitals of Quang Ngai Province in central Vietnam at the time they wrote the report presented below. In this sector as in others, the ceasefire and the accords ratified in January, 1973 scarcely changed the lives of the population. The prisons remained full, the police continued to torture, the U.S. continued to finance and “advise” those who directed the system of camps and prisons.]

Since the ceasefire agreements, the Saigon government continues to detain, to arrest, to interrogate, and to torture a large number of civilians in Quang Ngai. At present there are about two thousand political prisoners in the province. At the Provincial Interrogation Center, there are more than a thousand; a thousand are in the prison of Quang Ngai and hundreds of others are in the eight district detention centers. During two years’ time, we have encountered hundreds of detainees. We have never seen a single prisoner arrested for a criminal offense. The detainees of Quang Ngai wear labels giving name and registration number; often the words “political prisoner” are written. At least 90% of these prisoners are political prisoners and not prisoners of war.

Since the January agreements, the number of prisoners has remained constant. The majority of the persons arrested before January have not been released. One example: Phan Thi Thi, a woman sixty-seven years old, was incarcerated on 17 November 1972 in the district of Mo Duc; she had transported 1 kilogram of rice into a zone considered “low security.” She was taken to the police headquarters of Mo Duc, interrogated, beaten, tortured. During this session, her brain was affected and half her body is paralyzed. The first time that we saw her, in the prisoners’ section of the hospital, she was lying on sheets of cardboard. She was naked, and under her a hole was cut out for her relief. She was greatly weakened, weighed about 35 kilos (77 pounds), and the other prisoners fed her.¹ After the signing of the accords, the police took her to the district capital to interrogate her again, in spite of her paralysis and although she was hardly able to speak. After repeated requests, we were able to “transfer her temporarily” to the Quang Ngai hospital, but on April 14, when her health had become critical to the point that she was placed in an intensive care ward, the police refused to release her. Phan Thi Thi remains incarcerated.

This is also the case for women who have been imprisoned for much longer periods. Huynh Thi Tuyet, a thirty-six-year-old woman, was arrested in March 1967. She says that she was taken with other villagers by the army close to her village, in the district of Son

Tinh. Many other villagers were freed because the soldiers had had enough of watching the group of “prisoners”, but, she says, she was taken together with 18 persons, including a child of 7 and a man of 59, to the prison of Quang Ngai, where she remains ever since, without knowing of what she is accused. Marjorie Nelson, an American doctor, has examined her several times. Huynh Thi Tuyet continues to consider herself a forgotten prisoner who may remain so for a long time to come. Here are some other cases: Ho Thi Nhung, thirty-six-year-old woman, mother of a baby a few weeks old, suffering from respiratory difficulties; Phan Suong, 49, victim of advanced tuberculosis and pneumonia; Trinh Thi Cung, a young woman of 18, suffering from venereal disease after having been raped six times by men of the Saigon Army; Nguyen Thi Nuoi, a woman of 42, with cancer of the lymphatic passages.

Torture by Electricity

The authorities customarily take the “suspects” from the detention center to the interrogation center, a building located in the middle of the detention complex; there they are interrogated and often tortured. The situation has not changed at all since January. We were able to prove this by means of medical examinations, interviews, direct testimony of the prisoners, and also by means of X-rays and photographs. Phan Thi Nguyet, a nineteen-year-old woman, found herself in the interrogation center and in prison six months before the agreements. The police wanted to know whether her father, who left for the DRV when she was 9, had communicated with her, since rumor had it that he had returned to the sector. Nguyet was tortured on eight occasions before the accords; after the signing, she was taken from the prison back to the interrogation center where she was tortured by electricity; she was made to swallow soapy water and was beaten four times between the 2nd of February and the 23 of March. Her nervous system was affected and her left leg is paralyzed.

Several people arrested after the ceasefire have told us their stories. We encountered a woman, Nguyen Thi Sanh, on March 6, in the prisoners’ section of the hospital. Her body was swollen all over and had black and blue marks; she was immobilized on her bed, her eyes swollen and almost shut. She is a native of Duc My, district of Mo Duc. Four days earlier, she left her house to go to the fields; the village chief stopped her, accusing her of wanting to make contact with soldiers of the P.R.G. She answered that she herself, her six children and her husband—a lieutenant of the Saigon Army—had fled the communists six times, but the village chief ordered the police to interrogate her and beat her. She was severely beaten at the district center and sent to the Provincial Interrogation Center, but

she arrived there in such a state that she was hospitalized. At this time she is in the Quang Ngai Interrogation Center.

Lam is twelve. He was arrested after the ceasefire and sent to the Interrogation Center. When the police apprehended him, he carried two vials of penicillin in his pocket; he was accused of carrying medicine to the P.R.G. He now remains at the Interrogation Center; still, the authorities know that his father is a nurse at the Quang Ngai hospital. His father has stated to the police that Lam was carrying the medicine to a sick aunt.

Loc is seventeen. He is a student. He was arrested by the military police and incarcerated at the Provincial Interrogation Center. Yet his identification papers were in order and he is too young to serve under a flag. The police gave him the choice between enrolling or remaining in the interrogation center for one year, at which time he will be old enough to become a soldier. All of these acts occurred after the ceasefire.

Since January, the Saigon government has scarcely demonstrated a spirit of reconciliation. The festival of Tet came shortly after the signing of the accords. The government authorities of Quang Ngai clearly showed their intentions in the instructions published regarding family reunions. Trucks equipped with loudspeakers announced to the inhabitants that if members of their families who worked for the P.R.G. or the Northerners attempted to return home for the festival, the neighbors should beat them to death.

Harsh measures were taken by the police and the army in order to strictly control and limit movements of the population.² Once again, it was announced by loudspeakers mounted on trucks to the tens of thousands of refugees of the provincial capital and vicinity that it was forbidden on penalty of death by gunfire to go onto the ancestral lands and into ancestral homes. Since the signing of the accords, no movement has been authorized between zones.

Thousands of Shells

On May 1st, Nguyen Quy, a grandfather 74 years old, deaf and nearly blind, was arrested and imprisoned in the detention center of Son Tinh. We learned this from a person who worked at the hospital. His house was located in the region of My Lai (scene of one of the most “famous” massacres); almost a year ago, fighting was going on there. He sought refuge with his ten-year-old granddaughter on the island of Ly Son. After that, he decided to return to the mainland and pay a visit to friends in the camp for refugees from the My Lai region. The refugee camp is made of tents set up on a sandy point of the Tra-Khuc river, just outside of Quang Ngai. On his arrival, he was arrested by the police, who did

not believe his story; they took him away, leaving his granddaughter alone and in tears in the camp. Friends came to ask us to help him. The chief of the “special police” (in fact specialized in torture) of the district of Son Tinh declared that the old man presented a potential danger, since he might have stayed in a zone that had come under the control of the P.R.G. Although he had valid identification papers and had worked for the government in the past, it was necessary to interrogate him. It took us four weeks of constant efforts to have him freed.

At the “rehabilitation” center of the provincial hospital, more wounded have been admitted since the ceasefire than during the same period last year. Most of the wounds are attributed to Saigon artillery shells, to exchanges of fire and to mines. Almost every evening since the ceasefire, we have heard government artillery. A U.S. diplomat told us that at Hue, the Saigon forces fire thousands of shells every week because “the more they fire, the more the Americans replace their ammunitions.”

Human Mine Detectors

Liem is a little girl of twelve, a native of Mo Duc; Phong is a boy of 10, a native of Son Tinh; both of them are paraplegics because they were wounded by shells that fell near their home one night in February. Le Nam is 50; his right leg had to be amputated above the knee; on February 24, he was working in his rice paddy several hundred meters from a P.R.G. flag when a helicopter of the Saigon Army fired at him several times. On February 7, on the 5th day of Tet, a man of 70 named Vinh left the Binh Son district refugee camp early in the morning to cultivate his sweet potatoes. Both his legs were cut off by a government army mine that had been set the night before and not deactivated. On February 15, Buoi, a 14-year-old boy, lost his left leg below the knee in a grenade explosion.

We also received first-hand reports from persons from the Batangan peninsula who were forced at gunpoint to lower a P.R.G. flag. Luckily, this time, the ground was not mined, but the Saigon soldiers told the people that they were using them as mine detectors. The story was told to us by Tran Lam, 57 years old, a native of Phu Quy. The incident, he told us, took place on March 27. Tran Lam was going from the market of Binh Son towards Binh Due. He told the soldiers that he was old and did not want to die; the soldiers laughed out loud and said they were young and that he had to die for them...

We also want to say that the United States must be held responsible for these injuries after the ceasefire, for these incarcerations, for the repressive system in which the refugees are held and which the U.S. has been financing for years, while Americans advise the

Saigon personnel. We hope that the ceasefire will be respected, that all the prisoners will be released, and that the Vietnamese will be able to return to the land of their ancestors. Then, if the killing stops, if the prisoners are set free, if the peasants return to their land, the Vietnamese will finally have the possibility of freely determining the future of their country.

Notes

Frontispiece

1. Countries are included on the Frontispiece diagram on the following criteria: (a) that they have been classified as using torture “on an administrative basis” or as “an essential mode of governance” in the Amnesty International (AI) *Report on Torture* (U.S. edition, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), or in other AI reports on specific countries; (b) that there is other reasonably authentic evidence of extensive torture in the 1970s, with cumulative numbers tortured probably in excess of 500, and with torture carried out on a systematic basis in multiple detention centers. There are ambiguities in the concept of torture and in the notion of torture on an administrative basis. The data are also imperfect. But we see no reason to believe that there are any net biases that should call into question the fundamental drift of facts described in this chart (whose roots are discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.2). Amnesty International’s global concern for political prisoners and their maltreatment has made it the subject of abuse and criticism for alleged bias by a variety of ideologues and special interest groups. For several from the West, and a vigorous AI response, see the following: “Amnesty’s Odd Man In,” editorial *New York Times* (14 December 1978); Stephen Miller, “Politics and Amnesty International,” *Commentary*, March 1978; Andrew Blane, “The Individual in the Cell: A Rebuttal to ‘Politics and Amnesty International’,” *Matchbox*, Winter 1979.

The parent-client relationship is one of superiority-inferiority, dominance-subordination, and control-dependency. It arises commonly from sheer economic-military strength and interest by one power relative to its neighbors, and the relationship often emerges without the overt use of force. Among the 26 planets, for a substantial number the governments were installed by direct or indirect action of the sun; and for all of them the sun is recognized to be the friendly superpower within whose orbit the planets move, protected from external or internal threats by the military and economic might of the sun. We have limited the number of planets to cases of countries basking in the sun’s orbit that have also received significant flows of direct economic and military aid. South Africa is excluded immediately on grounds of the absence of such aid, but its ties to Great Britain and its strength and relative independence would disqualify it from planetary status in any event.

2. Data for the filiation lines connecting the sun with the planets were taken from the

following: military aid, 1946-1975, from A.I.D., *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations*, 1976 ed.; number of client military trained in the United States, 1950-1975, from “The Pentagon’s Proteges, U.S. Training Programs For Foreign Military Personnel,” *NACLA’s Latin America & Empire Report*, January 1976, p. 28; and police aid or training to clients, from Michael T. Klare, *Supplying Repression*, Field Foundation, December, 1977, pp. 20-21.

Preface to the 2014 Edition

1. Among other publications, see E.S. Herman and N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1988, Pantheon; second edition with new introduction, 2002. N. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 1989, South End. Edward Herman and Robert McChesney, *Global Media: the Missionaries of Global Capitalism*, 1997.
2. For review, see N. Chomsky, “‘Green Light’ for War Crimes,” in Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line* (Verso, 2000). Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen Shalom, eds., *East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*, Roman & Littlefield, 2000 (in which a slightly different version of “‘Green Light’ for War Crimes” also appears). For detailed review of the early years, in addition to the chapter reprinted here, see Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (1982).
3. See *Manufacturing Consent*.
4. Fallows, *Atlantic*, June 1982. Power, “*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*,” Basic Books, 2002.
5. Moynihan with Suzanne Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, Little, Brown, 1978.
6. John Holdridge (State Dept.), Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2nd sess., Sept. 14, 1982, 71.
7. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.
8. Open Society Foundation, *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition*, Feb. 2013.
9. Greg Grandin, “The Latin American Exception,” <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175650/>.

Prefatory Note

1. The principal sources for this account of the suppression are affidavits supplied to the authors by the publisher and associate publisher of Warner Modular Publications, Inc.
2. See Chapter 2, section 2.2, and Volume II, Chapter 4.
3. For a more general discussion of mass media choices and bases of selection see chapter 2, section 2.0.
4. Herbert Mitgang, "Nixon Book Dispute Erupts at Meeting," *New York Times* (28 May 1978) p. 16.

1 Introduction: Summary of Major Findings and Conclusions

1. See, for example, Andrei D. Sakharov, "Human Rights: A Common Goal," *Wall Street Journal* (27 June 1978); also Valery Chalidze, "Human Rights: A Policy of Honor." *Wall Street Journal* (8 April 1977). According to Chalidze, "A state does not initiate aggression with a declaration of war; it begins by persecuting its own citizens' honest and lawful behavior. After its critics are silenced, a government can prepare international aggression, whip up a war psychosis among its citizens and secretly increase military expenditures at the expense of social needs."
2. See M.J. Crozier, S.P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*. NYU Press, 1975. For discussion, see N. Chomsky, "Human Rights" and American Foreign Policy, *Spokesman*, 1978.
3. See especially Richard A. Falk, *The Vietnam War and International Law*, Princeton University Press, 1968, 2 vols.
4. See Seymour M. Hersh, *Chemical and Biological Warfare*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1968; Eric Prokosch, "Conventional Killers," *The New Republic*, 1 November 1969; AFSC-Narmic, *Weapons for Counterinsurgency*, 1970; Prokosch, *The Simple Art of Murder: Anti-Personnel Weapons and their Development*, AFSC-Narmic, 1972.
5. See below, chapter 4, section 4.
6. The deep involvement of the U.S. government in the overthrow of the last democratic government of Brazil is discussed in detail in A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors*, Pantheon, 1978, pp. 38-116 and in Jan K. Black, *United States Penetration of Brazil*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977, *passim*. Some of the key facts are as follows: the U.S. government not only knew of the plotting but probably helped to coordinate it and to persuade key military personnel to join the conspiracy. It never informed the legally

established government of the plots, and never considered trying to talk the military out of carrying out the coup. The official U.S. worry was only that the coup might fail, and the United States was not only ready with standby arrangements for aid, but assured coup plotters of our intervention in their favor if trouble arose. The Sixth Fleet was standing offshore at the time of the coup. A great many of the Brazilian military had been trained in the United States, and their links with U.S. intelligence and military personnel were extensive and warm. The U.S.-trained elements of the Brazil military predominated in the conspiracy. The CIA had pervaded Brazil with informers and paid propagandists, and had engaged in extensive bribing in Brazilian elections. A state investigation of CIA bribery was cut short by the coup. While collaborating intimately in a real anti-democratic coup, cold war liberals like Ambassador Lincoln Gordon seem to have convinced themselves that Goulart and the Communists were an imminent threat to democracy. Goulart may have been a threat to U.S. economic interests, for which the embassy is the *de facto* representative, but the threat to democracy was a myth that conveniently helped justify U.S. subversion.

[7.](#) See below, chapter 2, sections 1.1, 1.4, and 1.5.

[8.](#) See below, chapter 2, section 1.

[9.](#) Langguth, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

[10.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 225-26.

[11.](#) *Ibid.* Langguth cites a number of other examples as well, as have U.S. personnel who were directly involved in such programs; see chapter 5, sections 1.5, and 1.6.

[12.](#) See below, section 14.

[13.](#) See below, “Notes on Some Insecurity States in Latin America,” chapter 4, section 5.2. Also the corresponding definition of “security” as applied to “pacified” populations, chapter 5, note 66.

[14.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[16.](#) “New Wounds on Both Sides in the Battle of Terrorism,” *New York Times* (25 June 1978).

[17.](#) See “Free Photography,” *New Statesman*, 29 September 1978, describing how over 600 Namibians, most of them children and old people, were killed by bombing by French-built Mirage jets and by paratroopers transported by U.S.-built Hercules troop

carriers. The official South African explanation that Kassinga was a SWAPO military base “was a lie,” as discovered by foreign journalists who visited shortly after. Rather, “The massacre was planned with brutal cynicism to forestall a breakthrough in negotiations with the UN which might lead to fair and free elections in Namibia.” South Africa hoped that this murderous attack would provoke SWAPO to break negotiations, so that the guerrillas could be portrayed as “intransigents” while Vorster gained “much-needed international sympathy.” “Vorster must have known it would not be worth risking such a crude ploy unless he could expect only the shallowest of coverage from the Western press.” He was not disappointed. The article notes that the mainstream British press offered “little coverage” and refused even to publish photos supplied by AP. In the United States as well the media virtually suppressed this butchery. On the background, see Christopher Hitchens, “Namibia—The Birth of a Nation,” *New Statesman*, 3 November 1978; *Fellowship*, May 1977.

[18.](#) Haynes Johnson, “Terrorism: It’s the crime of our times,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (13 March 1977).

[19.](#) Or, at least, their “excesses,” though regrettable and offensive to high-minded and civilized Westerners, are nevertheless understandable under the unfortunate circumstances created by “terrorism.”

This process of thrusting a frightening symbol before the public, and simultaneously assuring them that their government is busily engaged in dealing with the problem, is an example of political action in which “a semblance of reality is created, and facts that do not fit are screened out of it. Conformity and satisfaction with the basic order are the keynotes; and the acting out of what is to be believed is a psychologically effective mode of instilling conviction and fixing patterns of future behavior.” Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, University of Illinois, 1964, p. 17.

[20.](#) For an example of the brainwashing effect of media on willing victims, see the remarks by *Encounter*’s columnist R (G. Rees), *Encounter*, December 1976, describing the period when the thesis that universities (as part of an evil society) must be destroyed “rang across every campus in the United States, and libraries were burned, and universities wrecked”—all in his fevered imagination, needless to say. On the role of the U.S. government in inspiring terrorist acts by students and others through the use of provocateurs, see Dave Dellinger, *More Power Than We Know*, Doubleday, 1976; introduction to N. Blackstock, ed., *Cointelpro*, Vintage, 1976. See these references and also M. Halperin et al., *The Lawless State*, Penguin, 1976, for some discussion of FBI

terrorism during this period, which vastly exceeded anything attributable to the student movement.

- [21.](#) Within peace movement circles, the role of the government in fomenting violence was well-known long before it reached the attention of Senate inquiries. It was standard practice, from the earliest stage, to be wary of individuals who were calling for violent acts on the assumption, often verified later, that they were government agents.
- [22.](#) Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975, pp. 184-85.
- [23.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- [24.](#) *Ibid.*, p.191.
- [25.](#) *Ibid.*
- [26.](#) *The Amnesty International Report*, 1975-1976, p. 84.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*
- [28.](#) *Report on Torture*, pp. 206-7. For many more gruesome descriptions, see the Appendix: "Special Report on Chile," by Rose Styron.
- [29.](#) For further discussion, see chapter 2 and chapter 4, section 5.2.
- [30.](#) Hugo Neira, "Guerre Totale contre les Elites en Amerique Latine," *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1977.
- [31.](#) *The Amnesty International Report*, 1975-1976, p. 84.
- [32.](#) See chapter 4, section 5.
- [33.](#) See chapter 4, section 5.1.
- [34.](#) International Movement of Catholic Intellectuals and Professionals, "Voice From Northeastern Brazil To III Conference of Bishops," Mexico, November 1977, reprinted in LADOC (Latin America Document Service), May-June 1978, p. 15.
- [35.](#) "Turning Point in Brazil," 2 June 1965.
- [36.](#) The review by Tom Buckley (27 December 1978) of the ABC documentary shown that evening neatly encapsulates many of the standard maneuvers of propagandists on both sides of the iron curtain. We return to it in section 7. Its main characteristic is distress at the very airing of the subject of torture in U.S. client states. There is not a word of sympathy for the victims of these little tyrannies, let alone any recognition of the U.S. role, but only outrage over the fact that ABC has engaged in this

“simpleminded” exercise.

37. Quoted in Reza Baraheni, “Persia Today: No Magic Carpet Rides,” *Matchbox* (Amnesty International), Fall 1976.
38. Quoted in *ibid.*
39. William A. Dorman and Ehsan Omdad, “Reporting Iran the Shah’s Way,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, January-February 1979.
40. See Reza Baraheni, *The Crowned Cannibals: Writings on Repression in Iran*, Vintage, 1976; Bahman Nirumand, *Iran, the New Imperialism in Action*, Monthly Review, 1969. The chief CIA analyst on Iran from 1968-73, Jesse Leaf, stated that the practice of torture by the SAVAK was well-known to the CIA and that “a senior C.I.A. official was involved in instructing officials in the Savak on torture techniques.... The C.I.A.’s torture seminars, Mr. Leaf said, ‘were based on German torture techniques from World War II’.” Seymour M. Hersh, “Ex-Analyst Says C.I.A. Rejected Warning on Shah,” *New York Times* (7 January 1979). On the corruption, see chapter 2, p. 64.
41. Of the non-industrialized countries, Iran has been the largest purchaser of military equipment in the world, buying over \$18 billion in arms from the United States alone, 1950-1977. “Defense” spending increased tenfold from 1971 to 1975. See Cynthia Arnson, Stephen Daggett, and Michael Klare; “Background Information on the Crisis in Iran,” Institute for Policy Studies, Washington. D.C., December 1978.
42. As it became more obvious that the Shah’s regime was seriously threatened, the veil began to lift slightly. Thus, Youssef M. Ibrahim reported from Teheran in the *New York Times* (4 December 1978) that “the fear of torture, prison, arbitrary arrest, and the ubiquitous presence of Savak seems overwhelming,” and describes the torture of political detainees and the horrible conditions of life for the masses of people driven to urban slums by what is called in the West the Shah’s “progressive” land reform program, including people who work a 13-hour day, live in miserable huts, waste away from disease—but also ask the reporter to leave them alone, because “we don’t want to attract attention,” for obvious reasons. The continuing torture of prisoners is discussed away from the U.S. media mainstream by Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, *Village Voice* (4 December 1978), reporting the experiences of a recently released British prisoner (from the *International Herald Tribune*). The same authors discuss the actual impact of the Shah’s “agricultural reforms,” citing the well-known French agronomist René Dumont, an adviser to the Shah who became “appalled” when he

discovered that “the reforms were a farce” that drove the peasants from the land which was then taken over by agribusiness, much of the land becoming desert, with the effect that “large numbers of the Iranian people face starvation” (*Village Voice*, 20 November 1978). For further discussion, see Thierry Brun and René Dumont, “Imperial Pretensions and Agricultural Dependence,” MERIP Reports No. 71, October 1978. One rarely reads commentary on these matters in the mainstream press, but see the letter by Iran specialist Richard Cottam (*Washington Post*, 2 October 1978), responding to some absurd commentary by Joseph Kraft and outlining the progressive destruction of agriculture, real income decline for most Iranians, and the massive waste of resources on weapons and consumption for the newly rich. On SAVAK and other Iranian government activity in the United States (surveillance, subversion of Congress and universities, use of provocateurs, etc.), surely with the cooperation of the U.S. government, see Gregory F. Rose, “The Shah’s Secret Police Are Here,” *New York*, 18 September 1978.

43. Cited by James A. Bill, “Iran and the Crisis of ’78,” *Foreign Affairs*, Winter, 1978-79. Moderate opposition groups, according to Bill, were “stunned and embittered by Carter’s performance” and “turned more sharply than ever away from the United States.” While Western propaganda pretends that it was Carter’s advocacy of human rights that laid the basis for the explosive events in Iran in 1978, the fact of the matter is that it was his clarity in *rejecting* any concern for human rights that gave an impetus to these developments. Much the same was true in Nicaragua, as Carter’s expressed support for Somoza contributed to setting off the uprising of August-September, 1978. See chapter 4, section 5.2. See also notes 80 and 88, this chapter.
44. See *New Statesman*, 29 September 1978, citing new shipments of supplies for crowd control (insert in the *Nation*, 21 October 1978, Michael Klare, “Iranian Quagmire”). See also *Internews International Bulletin*, 20 November 1978, on “anti-riot” gear sent to the Shah after the declaration of martial law and the massacres of September 1978, and the plan to send a U.S. army team to train the Shah’s army in riot control.
45. Walter Laqueur, “Trouble for the Shah,” *New Republic*, 23 September 1978. The same journal also featured an hysterical article by Robert Moss explaining events in Iran as basically a Soviet plot (2 December 1978).
46. In chapter 3 and 4 we will give a number of examples. See the 13 reports on individual countries discussed by the State Department prepared under the direction of the Coalition on Human Rights and the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy,

reproduced in the Congressional Record, 5 April 1978, pp. H 2507-2518. These reports show in great detail the extent to which the State Department role amounts to apologetics for client terror. Typical is the statement by the Office of Haitian Refugee Concerns of the National Council of Churches, which claims that the section on Haiti consists largely of “generalized statements of improvements based either on flagrant misrepresentation or outright omission of facts that have been presented to the State Department by our office and by others.” They cite the repeated use of words like “apparently” and “appear” with respect to alleged improvements (the infamous Fort Dimanche prison is “reportedly” being replaced by a modern facility, etc.).

But even more instructive in the glossing over of such problems is the experience of the eleven opponents of the government exiled in 1977, to whom the State Department makes several references. Several of these men had been abroad and had returned under the “national reconciliation” program begun by Duvalier in 1972. The report notes the reconciliation program but does not point out that these men were rearrested and held without charges upon their return. All eleven then became part of a group of 105 who were released in September, 1977 and, according to the State Department, were “presented to the press and the diplomatic corps at the time of their release.” *Not* reported is the fact that the eleven who were to be exiled had been withdrawn from their cells the previous March and given six months of intensive medical treatment to prepare them for international inspection. Despite this precaution by the Haitian government *all eleven* were hospitalized again in Jamaica within a week of their release, an event which was covered widely in the Jamaican press.

On the treatment of “boat people” from Haiti, see Volume II, chapter 3.

- [47.](#) Richard H. Rovere, “Letter from Washington,” *New Yorker*, 29 April 1974. He continues: “but our withdrawal has contributed no more than did our original intervention to the stability of the region...” The idea that the U.S. intervention to prevent the victory of the Indochinese revolutionaries was intended, or might be conceived, as a contribution to “stability” is the kind of drivel that one expects from such sources.
- [48.](#) “Deliverance,” *Washington Post* (30 April 1975).
- [49.](#) See Volume II, chapter 1, and on “the last days,” see Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval*, Random House, 1977. But see note 12 of Volume II, chapter 1, on Snepp’s account.
- [50.](#) One exception was the effort of the CIA to eliminate Trujillo, who was not only

becoming something of an embarrassment, but perhaps even more important had gone too far in taking over the economic opportunities of the country as his private domain. Military regimes that have “radical” or “populist” flavor, as in Peru, may also find themselves a target for U.S. intrigue and “destabilization”.

51. For a discussion of the remarkably close parallel between the Khrushchev and Brezhnev doctrines, and the antecedent Eisenhower and Johnson doctrines, respectively, which may well have contributed to the choice of rhetoric, see Thomas M. Franck and Edward Weisband, *Word Politics: Verbal Strategy Among the Superpowers*, Oxford University Press, 1971.
52. See chapter 5.
53. This may be an understatement of the disproportion; the ratio of firepower expended was closer to 500 to 1, and U.S. firepower was consistently used against civilian targets, as in the saturation bombing and “free fire zones” in populated regions or in random “harassment and interdiction” fire by artillery. Cf. General Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers*, Univ. Press of New England, 1977, p. 47n., for one of many examples. See p. 310. NLF violence was far slighter in scale as well as more selective in character. See Edward S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam*, Pilgrim Press, 1970, for discussion and evidence.
54. One reason why this happened is that “live” coverage in Vietnam was invariably a portrayal of U.S. actions, since those of the enemy were not accessible on the same basis to U.S. media. Despite controlled displays of U.S. actions, with so many of them destructive it was not easy to maintain an image of beneficence.
55. Some propagandists have not been satisfied with real or manufactured atrocities in postwar Indochina, so that we find such flights of rhetoric as those of Sidney Hook, who writes: “It is indisputably true that in every collectivist economy in the world today political despotism prevails, exercising a terror unexampled in its nature by anything known in previous history.” That is, it is “indisputably true” that the terror that prevails today in Hungary and Poland exceeds that of Nazi Germany. Reprinted from the *New York Times* in *Encounter*, February 1978.
56. The term “Khmer Rouge” was coined by Sihanouk as a defamatory appellation for the guerrilla and peasant movements that he was attempting to suppress in the 1960s, often with great brutality and violence. It has become standard in the West, so much so that we too will use it, with misgivings. Comparably, the term “Viet Cong” was created by

the U.S.-Saigon propaganda services, and also became standard in Western commentary, though even those initially supportive of the U.S. client regime in the South (e.g., Joseph Buttinger) recognized that the “Viet Cong” were simply the Viet Minh reconstituted to defend themselves against the terrorism of the U.S.-Saigon regime. Similarly, the term “South Vietnamese” was used by the propaganda services, and adopted without question by the submissive intelligentsia of the West, to refer to the tiny elite placed in power by the United States, which even the U.S. command treated with contempt.

57. See Ian Black, “Peace or no peace, Israel will still need cheap Arab labour,” *New Statesman*, 28 September 1978, for a rare discussion, not matched in the United States, to our knowledge.
58. See chapter 4, section 1. As we shall see, it is not unusual in the Free Press to place the blame for the massacre on the victims.
59. See chapter 3, section 4.4.
60. See chapter 4, note 224.
61. The word “negligible” may be too generous. In response to this charge in a letter by the present authors, the Executive Director of the CDM wrote an indignant denial to the *New York Times* (letter, 9 August 1978) which failed to cite even a single example to the contrary. It is also intriguing to read his effort to interpret the charge against CDM—which, as his letter reveals, is fully accurate—as an expression of “indifference to truth and to the suffering of Soviet victims” on the part of the present authors. Comparably, someone who criticized a Russian party hack for focusing his attention on human rights abuses in the West could be denounced for his “indifference to the suffering of the Chileans and Vietnamese.” Compare also the *New York Times* critique of the ABC documentary, already discussed, with its effort to shift attention to the Communist enemy.
62. For illustrations, see chapter 2, sections 1.4 and 1.5.
63. The absence of official censorship allows room for sometimes vigorous debate among the substantial interests, and fringe and dissident elements are at least allowed to exist and argue, mainly among themselves, but occasionally penetrating to the consciousness of decision-makers, especially on matters of irrational behavior in relationship to establishment objectives.
64. The phenomenon has long been familiar. In a study conducted for the group of

historians who enlisted in the service of the U.S. government in World War I (cf. Volume II, chapter 2, section 1), Victor S. Clark concluded that the “voluntary co-operation of the newspaper publishers of America resulted in a more effective standardization of the information and arguments presented to the American people, than existed under the nominally strict military control exercised in Germany.” (“The German Press and the War,” *Historical Outlook*, November 1919, cited by Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America*, Louisiana State University Press, 1975, p. 140.) The same has often been true since. Given the general community of interest among the Western powers with regard to the Third World, one is not surprised to find, for example, that the media in Great Britain tended to view the Vietnam War pretty much through U.S. eyes. See *The British Press and Vietnam*, Indochina Solidarity Conference, July 1973. See also, Alex Carey, “The ennobling of the Vietnam war,” unpublished, June 1978, for analysis of parts of a remarkable BBC TV “retrospective” on the war, which exhibits a degree of subservience to the U.S. propaganda system beyond what would be tolerated even by U.S. commercial TV, an interesting example of cultural colonization.

- 65. On the nature and quality of this ideology among the Brazilian military, see Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 190, 195.
- 66. For extensive evidence, see *ibid.*, pp. 188-199, and 210-222. On the long-standing strong current of extreme rightwing tendencies within the U.S. military establishment, see Fred Cook, “The Ultras,” *Nation*, 30 June 1962.
- 67. State ownership has continued to play an important though usually declining role in some of these states, based to a great extent on inertia and on the usefulness of state enterprise for more direct looting. See chapter 4, sections 1 and 2.
- 68. On the concept of “security” as its usage has developed in the West, see p. 5-6; also chapter 5, note 65.
- 69. Cited in Black, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- 70. Taylor Branch, “The Letelier Investigation,” *New York Times Magazine*, 16 July 1978.
- 71. Black, *op. cit.*, quoting U.S. General Robert W. Porter, p. 211.
- 72. On the Letelier-Moffitt murders, see Saul Landau, *They Educated The Crows*, Transnational Institute, 1978. See also note 70.
- 73. See also note 42, above.

[74.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, p. 73, note 34.

[75.](#) See the Nixon eulogies in *ibid.*, p. 55.

[76.](#) Quoted in Black, *op. cit.*, p. 55, from the *Jornal do Brasil*, 4 February 1972.

[77.](#) See chapter 2, section 2.2. Also Volume II, chapter 1, section 1.

[78.](#) Not entirely, however. For example, Jean and Simonne Lacouture point out that after “the reconquest and unification of Vietnam by Vietnamese citizens” in April 1975, there was no bloody revenge. The Vietnamese revolutionaries did not follow the example of “their French, Russian or Chinese predecessors. Not to kill is a great virtue; one seems to ignore that a bit too easily.” “They are probably the first victors in a civil war (embittered and aggravated by two foreign interventions) who have not unleashed any operation of massive reprisal.” Furthermore, “the Vietnamese *maquisards*, more honorable than their French comrades of 1944,” did not humiliate the hundreds of thousands of prostitutes created by the American invasion. (*Vietnam: voyage a travers une victoire*, Seuil, 1976, pp. 7, 11, 110-12).

The Lacoutures’ book is a record of their visit to Vietnam in April-May 1976. Though highly critical of the Vietnamese revolution—so much as to elicit a sharp rejoinder in the Vietnamese press—it was nevertheless sympathetic and balanced, and did not fail to describe the horrendous residue of thirty years of imperial violence. It was unable to find a U.S. publisher, and its very existence was denied in the U.S. press, as we shall see in Volume II, chapter 4. Jean Lacouture, a distinguished commentator on Vietnam with decades of experience in the country, is treated very differently when his message is more palatable to imperial tastes, as we shall see in Volume II, chapter 6.

[79.](#) For Western precedents, considered highly moral in contrast to the barbarous behavior of the Vietnamese, see Volume II, chapter 2, section 2.

[80.](#) Congress has barred aid (let alone reparations) to seven countries: Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. U.S. representatives to international financial institutions have been instructed to vote against aid to these countries, which are unique as “violators of human rights” (and by sheer coincidence, are also—apart from Uganda—countries which have recently freed themselves from the U.S.-dominated global system). In the case of Uganda, furthermore, the sanctions are *pro forma*, as we shall see. In contrast, proposals to bar aid to Nicaragua and South Korea, for example, because of human rights violations, were explicitly rejected, while Carter asked for—and received—authorization to continue arms aid to the Marcos

dictatorship (Richard Burt, “Carter Asks For No Cut in Arms Aid to Marcos Despite Negative Human-Rights Report,” *New York Times*, 6 February 1978); it is expected that the 1979 fiscal year will surpass the preceding year’s total of \$36 million despite massive human rights violations. The government has also made it clear that there is no intention “to link its massive arms sales to Iran with the issue of human rights” (Joe Alex Morris, *Los Angeles Times-Boston Globe*, 14 May 1977), naturally enough, since as Mr. Carter observed, “there is no leader with whom I have a deeper sense of personal gratitude and personal friendship” than the Shah, who received “no lecturing on the question of human rights” but only “a sympathetic ear” for a request for hundreds of advanced jet fighters (Geoffrey Godsell, *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 March 1978). See pp. 14f; see also William Branigan, “Vance Indicates Rights Issue, Iranian Arms Are Not Linked,” *Washington Post* (14 May 1977).

It is a real tribute to the propaganda system that the press can still refer to a “human rights campaign”—with occasional qualifications: e.g., “The Administration has been put in the embarrassing position of trying to check the zeal of some lawmakers who say they want to translate President Carter’s words into action.” (Clyde Farnsworth, *New York Times*, 19 June 1977, citing also a study that shows how the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with U.S. acquiescence and support, were increasing aid to the worst human rights violators.)

[81.](#) “The reader may have noticed that I never called the South Vietnamese dictatorships from Diem to Thieu fascist. There is a good historical reason for this: no matter how totalitarian some of the dictatorships are which the U.S. still supports around the world, they should be called fascist only if, in gaining power and at least temporarily maintaining it they can rely on—in addition to political terror—some organized mass support, something possessed by Mussolini, Hitler, and even Franco, but not by any of the South Vietnamese regimes.” Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy*, Horizon, 1977, p. 165. Other close observers were less reticent. General Lansdale, one of the chief U.S. specialists in subversion and counterrevolutionary intervention in Vietnam and elsewhere in the 1950s and 1960s, did not hesitate to describe the Diem regime that he backed as “fascistic” (cf. U.S. Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-67*, book 2, IV, A.5, tab 4, p. 66 (the government edition of the *Pentagon Papers*)).

[82.](#) Louis P. Kubicka, “From the Plain of Jars,” *Progressive*, March 1978. See Volume II, chapter 5.

- [83.](#) But curiously this is not true of the Viet Cong—who seem “eight feet tall” as they devise ingenious strategies to defeat American power and construct jungle laboratories, etc. Cf. John Mecklin, *Mission in Torment*, Doubleday, 1965, pp. 76f.
- [84.](#) These insights are expressed by Townsend Hoopes, Undersecretary of the Air Force and a critic of the war after 1968, and William Pfaff, liberal-in-residence at the Hudson Institute. See Pfaff, *Condemned to Freedom*, Random House, 1971, a close paraphrase (with no acknowledgment) of Hoopes, *Limits of Intervention*, David McKay, 1969, where Pfaff is mentioned. It is unclear who deserves the credit for these deep thoughts. Cf. Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, (p. 297f.) and *For Reasons of State* (p. 94f.) for precise attribution and for additional examples and discussion, from these and other sources.
- [85.](#) See Philip Shabecoff, “Murder Verdict Eased in Vietnam,” *New York Times*, 31 March 1970. While the *New York Times* and other Establishment journals repeatedly expressed their outrage over the uncivilized behavior of the barbarians we faced in Vietnam, their own reporters casually documented U.S. war crimes without notice or comment. See Seymour Melman, ed., *In the Name of America*, Turnpike, 1968—well before the full-force of U.S. “pacification” was unleashed. To cite just one subsequent example, Malcolm Browne, quoting an official who describes May, 1972 B-52 strikes as “the most lucrative raids made at any time during the war,” reports blandly that “every single bomb crater is surrounded with bodies, wrecked equipment and dazed and bleeding people. At one such hole there were 40 or 50 men, all in green North Vietnamese uniforms but without their weapons, lying around in an obvious state of shock. We sent in helicopter gunships, which quickly put them out of their misery” (*New York Times*, 6 May 1972). This was, needless to say, in express defiance of the laws of war to which the *Times* editors expressed their solemn devotion when deploring the treatment of pilots captured while bombing North Vietnamese villages.
- [86.](#) “A Craving For Rights,” 31 January 1977.
- [87.](#) Volume II, chapter 3, for reference and discussion.
- [88.](#) See above for examples from December 1977 through the fall of 1978, repeated with continuing fervor through the fall 1978 crisis. As demonstrations against the Shah reached a peak of intensity at the year’s end, “A State Department spokesman, Hodding Carter, yesterday reiterated Washington’s backing for the monarch, saying the United States supports the shah ‘in his efforts to promote stability’.” Robert H. Reid, AP, “Rioters paralyze Tehran,” *Boston Globe* (27 December 1978).

- [89.](#) *Internews International Bulletin*, 20 November 1978.
- [90.](#) Martin Woollacott, "Egypt's forces now without a role," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 15 October 1978. See also Thomas W. Lippman, "Display of Egypt's War Machine Hints at New Role," *Washington Post* (7 October 1978); John Cooley, "U.S. arms boost to Egypt, Israel awaits peace gains," *Christian Science Monitor* (12 October 1978); Ned Temko, "Egypt stepping forward to halt Soviets in Mideast," *ibid.* (6 December 1978). The main thrust of these and similar reports is that the Egyptian army is being reconstructed by the United States as an African strike force rather than a force designed for desert warfare. On the close relation between U.S. support for Israel and perceived Israeli success in upholding U.S. interests, see N. Chomsky, "Armageddon Is Well Located," *Nation*, 22 July 1977. It will be interesting to see whether the policy with regard to Egypt will be modified in the light of the collapse of the U.S. position in Iran.
- [91.](#) See "Terror—Argentina Style," *Matchbox*, Winter 1977; Geoff Rips, "Argentina: Gilding the Monster," *USLA Reporter*, 30 November 1978, citing a special appeal from Amnesty International who reports that "disappearances" are again on the increase after some cosmetic touches timed to coincide with the World Soccer Cup.
- [92.](#) See Rips, *ibid.*; also the report of the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, cited in the *USLA Reporter*, 30 November 1978; Karen DeYoung and Charles A. Krause, "Our Mixed Signals On Human Rights In Argentina," *Washington Post* (29 October 1978).
- [93.](#) *Ibid.* See also James Nelson Goodsell, "US takes a friendlier attitude toward Argentina," *Christian Science Monitor* (14 November 1978). Noting that the administration "was forced to buckle under to business and trade considerations, letting its public human-rights policy go by the board," Goodsell remarks: "This does not mean that Washington will not privately continue to nudge the Videla government behind the scenes on human rights. But it means that as a public issue, human rights is certainly going to take a less important role than in the past." Given its actual role in the past, this "less important role" will approach zero.
- [94.](#) Charles A. Krause, "Argentine Describes 'Excruciating' Pain of Torture," *Washington Post* (29 October 1978).
- [95.](#) Eric Bourne, "Czech dissident attacks Carter rights pressure," *Christian Science Monitor* (6 February 1978).

96. Edward Walsh, “President to Remain Firm in Human Rights Campaign,” *Washington Post* (3 June 1977). See Chomsky, *‘Human Rights’ and American Foreign Policy*, chapter 2, for discussion.

97. See chapter 3, section 4.4.

2 The CIA-Pentagon Archipelago

1. While we will speak of the “Brazilianization” of the Third World under U.S. aegis, we do not want to be understood as suggesting that the process began in 1964 with the U.S.-backed coup that installed the Brazilian generals in power, but merely that that coup and its totalitarian free enterprise aftermath have been warmly admired and considered worthy of emulation, maybe even in the United States (see p. 31). An earlier Latin American model is Guatemala (see chapter 4, section 5.2), and there are many still earlier precedents in Latin America and the Far East. The CIA effort in Guatemala in 1954 was no doubt stimulated in part by its earlier success in overthrowing the nationalist government in Iran and reinstalling the Shah in 1953. (Cf. David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government*, Bantam, 1964, pp. 116-121.) This achievement was highly praised in the United States. The *New York Times*, for example, explained in an editorial of August 6, 1954 that “underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism.” In later interventions, as in Vietnam, this “demonstration effect” was also much lauded.

Anyone inclined to regard such interventions as a post-World War II phenomenon might turn to the list of “Instances of the Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-1945,” containing over 200 entries, presented to Senate committees considering U.S. problems in Cuba by Secretary of State Rusk to show that there is ample precedent for intervention without congressional authorization. Hearings, “Situation in Cuba,” Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 87th Congress, Second Session, (17 September 1962), pp. 82-87.

2. Not only has liberalism contributed to the cold war anti-Communist ideology, but liberals were active leaders in the initiation of counterinsurgency and preventive subversion. The Vietnam War and the spread of military juntas in the American sphere of interest is to a considerable degree a product of cold war liberalism. Lobe points out that “the Kennedy Administration was infatuated with counterinsurgency theory and attempted to press this theory onto the practice and policies of Washington bureaucracies...Attorney-General Robert Kennedy was the energizing force in the

Special Group (CI), and it was he who propelled this body to recommend police aid to friendly Third World governments.” Thomas Lobe, *United States National Security Policy and Aid to the Thailand Police*, University of Denver Monograph Series in World Affairs, Vol. 14, Bk. 2, 1977, pp. 5, 7. Langguth adds that “at no time did any of its members question the C-I Group’s goals. As one participant recalled, ‘We knew we were acting from damn good motives’”—in their mood of chauvinist arrogance, the Kennedy liberals were untroubled by the fact that their imperial predecessors had characteristically adopted a similar pose. (A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors*, Pantheon, 1978, p. 50). Langguth describes in detail how the same group of Kennedy liberals engineered the overthrow of Brazilian democracy and its replacement with the subfascist regime that still rules, after President Goulart had refused Robert Kennedy’s admonition to end his flirtation with “romantic left-wing causes” (Langguth, p. 99). Particularly striking is his account of the great glee in Washington when Ambassador Lincoln Gordon returned after the successful military coup, the ninth case in which a military junta had replaced an elected government in Brazil since Kennedy was elected president, as General Andrew O’Meara reminded congressmen, adding that the Brazilian coup “saved that country from an immediate dictatorship.” Meanwhile the director of the AIFLD, which merged the talents of the AFL-CIO and the CIA, boasted of their role in instituting the new military dictatorship, and Robert Kennedy, though “still grieving over the murder of his brother,” nevertheless “found cheer in the events in Brazil,” saying: “Well, Goulart got what was coming to him. Too bad he didn’t follow the advice we gave him when I was down there.” Langguth, pp. 115-16.

The general attitude is expressed very well by William P. Bundy, referring to the origins and development of the CIA: to many in government, he wrote, “the preservation of liberal values, for America and other nations, required the use of the full range of U.S. power, including if necessary its more shady applications,” even if this might involve “ambiguity”. Foreword to Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, Free Press, 1977, p. x. Note that these words were written well after the ugly record could no longer be concealed.

3. Three-year comparisons were used except where data were unavailable or other political events intervened to require a two-year horizon.
4. One is the overall trend factor—if aid is going up in general, avoidance of bias may require deflating to the trend line. Such an adjustment does not alter the findings presented here.

5. On the valuable contribution of the Korean mercenaries to “security” in Vietnam, see below, chapter 5, section 1.4.
6. The origination, funding, and staffing of these institutions provide even more definitive evidence of U.S. dominance. See Teresa Hayter, *Aid As Imperialism*, Penguin, 1971; Michael Tanzer, *The Political Economy of International Oil and the Underdeveloped Countries*, Beacon, 1969, chapter 8.
7. There are eight countries common to Tables 1 and 2; Table 2 includes Ethiopia and Argentina, whereas Table 1 has instead Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.
8. *Supplying Repression*, Field Foundation, December 1977, p. 10. Italics in original. Table 2 is reproduced, with permission, from this work, p. 9.
9. Joanne Omang, “Latin American Left, Right Say U.S. Militarized Continent,” *Washington Post* (11 April 1977).
10. Black, *United States Penetration of Brazil*, pp. 220-22.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 170; Jeffrey Stein, “Grad School For Juntas,” *Nation*, 21 May 1977.
12. “A frank Minister of Foreign Relations in the mid-1960s startled even the subservient Brazilian press with his declaration, ‘What’s good for the United States is good for Brazil’.” E. Bradford Burns, “Brazil: The Imitative Society,” *Nation*, 10 July 1976.
13. *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
14. “Torture, an Official Way of Life,” *New York Times* (4 August 1974).
15. *Washington Post* (9 May 1977). On torture in Israel, see the *London Sunday Times* (19 June 1977), reporting the results of a 5-month investigation by the Insight team that produced evidence of torture of Arab prisoners so widespread and systematic that “it appears to be sanctioned at some level as deliberate policy,” perhaps “to persuade Arabs in occupied territories that it is least painful to behave passively.” This report was bitterly attacked in the United States, though the *Sunday Times* study itself, which is confirmed from many other sources, was barely reported. Two of the journalists who conducted the study, Paul Eddy and Peter Gillman, added substantial information on their procedures and discoveries and on the reaction to them in testimony before the United Nations, 6-7 September 1977; see the report of the Special Political Committee, Thirty-second session, Agenda item 57, UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, A/SPC/32/L.12, 11 November 1977. Mr. Eddy

informs us that the *London Times* Insight team report was offered to both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* but was rejected.

[16.](#) Holmes Brown, Don Luce, *Hostages of War, Saigon's Political Prisoners*, Indochina Mobile Education Project, 1973, pp. 62-63.

[17.](#) "U.S.-Iran Ties Strong but Controversial," *New York Times* (9 July 1978). See also chapter 1, note 40, on direct CIA involvement in torture.

[18.](#) Black, *op. cit.* p. 146.

[19.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 141-43; Langguth, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-65.

[20.](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

[21.](#) John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, Norton, 1978, p. 172.

[22.](#) *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, Interim Report of Select Senate Committee on Intelligence Activities, 20 November 1975, pp. 71-109.

[23.](#) See Volume II, chapter 5, and references cited there.

[24.](#) See below, section 2.2, this chapter.

[25.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-110.

[26.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[27.](#) See chapter 4, note 5.

[28.](#) Agee, *Inside the Company*, Stonehill, 1975, pp. 361-62.

[29.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-124. See note 2.

[30.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 155.

[31.](#) Stockwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-190.

[32.](#) Cf. note 1. We stress again the *systematic* character of CIA and other forms of U.S. intervention abroad. By the 1960s, the official definition of covert action was "any clandestine activity designed to influence foreign governments, events, organizations or persons in support of United States foreign policy." The major victims have been weaker, primarily Third World countries seeking a measure of independence, and there can be no doubt that covert action programs of the CIA have been a major factor in the deterioration of human rights throughout much of the world, including subversion of democratic elections, press manipulation, and direct export of violence. When subversion succeeds, some of the major terror organizations of the world (e.g., Iran's

SAVAK, South Korea's KCIA, Chile's DINA, the Greek CIA subsidiary under the fascist colonels—all noted for their ruthlessness, brutality and venality) have been installed with U.S. assistance; a minor aspect of their efforts is intimidation and control of residents in the United States, tolerated by the U.S. government in part to ensure that CIA agents will not be harassed in the parent country. There have been a number of important books reviewing a range of CIA activities, among them Agee, *op. cit.*; Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, Knopf, 1974; Howard Frazier, ed., *Uncloaking the CIA*, Free Press, 1978; *The Pike Report*, Spokesman, 1977, and the secret report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence headed by Congressman Otis Pike, published in the *Village Voice* (16, 23 February 1976). For a brief summary of CIA activities, see "CIA's Covert Operations vs. Human Rights," Center for National Security Studies, 122 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.

[33](#). See especially Langguth, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100; Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

[34](#). Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-107.

[35](#). J. Levinson and J. de Onis, *The Alliance That Lost Its Way*, Quadrangle, 1970, p. 89.

[36](#). "Helms Tells of Using Top U.S. Businessmen," *Washington Post* (11 March 1974). A discussion of Ashland Oil's report on corporate payments noted that \$98,968 of CIA payments to Ashland wound up in the company's own slush funds: "One speculation was that the money was CIA salary for its agents using overseas Ashland jobs as a cover." "What Ashland Oil said about itself," *Business Week*, 12 July 1975.

[37](#). Black, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[38](#). The latter case is an interesting one. While described by the compliant U.S. press as "Cuban subversion," following the government's lead, the secret arms cache in Venezuela is regarded with some skepticism by former CIA agent Joseph Smith, in a book written to support the CIA after Agee's critical study had appeared (Joseph Smith, *Portrait of a Cold Warrior*, Putnam, 1976, p. 382). Smith believes that the cache may have been a CIA job to meet the requirements of John F. Kennedy's anti-Castro crusade, which he was pressuring to make into a Latin American cause just before his assassination.

Arthur M. Schlesinger described the "great cache of weapons" found in Venezuela as "unquestionably Cuban in origin and provenance, secreted for terrorists at a point along the Caribbean coast," sure proof of the "central threat" posed by Castro to freedom in

the Americas. U.S. terrorism aimed at Cuba is not discussed. *A Thousand Days*, Houghton Mifflin, 1965; Fawcett reprinting, 1967, pp. 713-14.

- [39.](#) *American Banker*, 28 November 1975, p. 13. For another banker's expression of delight in the Marcos suspension of political democracy in the Philippines, see chapter 4, p. 238.
- [40.](#) "Philippines: A government that needs U.S. business," *Business Week*, 4 November 1972.
- [41.](#) "Marginalization" is a term used extensively in Church documents in Latin America to describe the condition of the vast majority of the population, but neither the term nor its content has yet penetrated the Judeo-Christian conscience or the media of North America. In the terminology of economics, the concept can be expressed as follows: in the social welfare function of the subfascist leadership, the lowest 90% of the population does not appear as a maximized (i.e., a value to be maximized). On the contrary, the underlying population—Veblen's suggestive phrase—appears in the economic calculations of this elite as a cost and threat.
- [42.](#) International Movement of Catholic Intellectuals and Professionals, "Voice From Northeastern Brazil to III Conference of Bishops," Mexico, November 1977, reprinted in *LADOC*, May-June 1978, p. 15.
- [43.](#) See Eduardo Galeano, "The De-Nationalization of Brazilian Industry," *Monthly Review*, December 1969.
- [44.](#) *Latin American Economic Report*, January 1976, p. 9.
- [45.](#) U.S. investment in Brazil grew from \$323 million in 1946 to about \$2.5 billion in 1972, although at the latter date it was only one-third of all foreign capital invested there. See Richard S. Newfarmer and Willard F. Mueller, *Multinational Corporations in Brazil and Mexico: Structural Sources of Economic and Noneconomic Power*, Report to the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 94th Congress, 1st Session, August 1975, p. 148.
- [46.](#) Henry Kamm, "Philippine Democracy, an American Legacy, Has Crumbled," *New York Times* (1 March 1977). What "crumbled" was, in any event, a short-lived facade, constantly manipulated by the U.S. (cf. Smith, *op. cit.*) and meaningless for most of the population. (See chapter 4, section 3.)
- [47.](#) Bernard Wideman, "Dominating The Pineapple Trade," *Far Eastern Economic*

Review, 8 July 1974; also, for Bataan, interviews by AFSC staff.

- [48.](#) Shelton H. Davis, *Victims of the Miracle*, Cambridge, 1977, chapter 8; also the two Church documents of 1973, “Marginalization of a People” and “I Have Heard the Cry of My People.”
- [49.](#) Stephen Sansweet, “Captive Workers: Prisoners in Colombia Are Working for Units of U.S. Multinationals,” *Wall Street Journal* (20 May 1975).
- [50.](#) “The Marginalization of a People, The Cry of the Churches,” 6 May 1973. This document was not allowed to circulate in Brazil, and the lay publisher and several of his co-workers were arrested, charged, and heavily fined for printing this “subversive” document. It has received negligible attention in the U.S. as well, by self-censorship rather than direct censorship as in Brazil.
- [51.](#) 9 August 1976.
- [52.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.
- [53.](#) 28 April 1975.
- [54.](#) David Felix, “Economic Development: Takeoffs Into Unsustained Growth,” *Social Research*, Summer 1969, p. 267.
- [55.](#) “I Have Heard the Cry of My People,” a powerful statement signed by 18 Catholic bishops of Northeast Brazil, 6 May 1973, discussed widely abroad, but again, not in the United States.
- [56.](#) Marvine Howe, “Brazil’s Inflation Said to Halve Real Income of Poor in Decade,” *New York Times* (14 December 1974).
- [57.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 241, 246.
- [58.](#) Stanford, 1973, p. vii.
- [59.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.
- [60.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 169, 170.
- [61.](#) Quoted in Gabriel Kolka, *The Politics of War*, Random House, 1970, p. 214.
- [62.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- [63.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- [64.](#) “By American choice” in a very literal sense: According to General Khanh, “On January, 1964 Wilson [his U.S. advisor] told me a coup d’etat was planned in Saigon

and that I was to become President.... On 8 February 1964 I took over as Premier.” Interview with the German magazine *Stern*, reprinted in *Los Angeles New Advocate* (1-15 April 1972).

It is interesting to contrast the official disavowals of any “arrogant” attempts to influence client governments, with the matter-of-fact assumption by U.S. officials that *they* determine who rules in these client states, as disclosed in internal governmental documents. General Taylor, in a briefing of 27 November 1964, for example, speaks with assurance about our “establishing some reasonably satisfactory government” in South Vietnam; and that if not satisfied with the way things are going, “we could try again with another civilian government....Another alternative would be to *invite back* a military dictatorship on the model of that headed of late by General Khanh.” (*Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, III, p. 669; emphasis added.)

Taylor, in fact, expressed his contempt for his Vietnamese puppets quite openly on the public record as well. Thus, he describes Diem’s “unexpected resistance” to the U.S. demand for direct participation in civil administration, and adds: “On the chance that Diem might continue to be intransigent, the old search for a possible replacement for him was resumed in State.” Later he speaks of “the impetuosity of Diem’s American critics and our opposition to ousting him without a replacement in sight.” When General Khanh began to lose his shaky political base, “the question was: If not Khanh, who? This time there was again the possibility that ‘Big’ Minh might do. He had been behaving quite well....” Taylor’s attitudes are perhaps no more astonishing than the fact that he is willing to voice them in public. See *Swords and Plowshares*, Norton, 1972, pp. 248, 294, 322.

[65.](#) *New York Herald Tribune* (3 February 1964). The evidence available suggests that Khanh’s exit was as much a matter of internal Vietnamese politics as his rise to power. While he was technically removed by the Vietnamese generals and shipped out to “indefinite exile,” this followed a message to the generals from Ambassador Taylor “that the U.S. government had lost confidence in Khanh and could not work with him” in accordance with his plans, which seemed to the U.S. mission to amount “to a dangerous Khanh-Buddhist alliance which might eventually lead to an unfriendly government with which we could not work” (Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 334f.).

[66.](#) *Civilian Casualty and Refugee Problems in South Vietnam*, Findings and Recommendations, Subcommittee on Refugees, Senate Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 9 May 1969, p. 36.

- [67](#). See Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, “Saigon’s Corruption Crisis: The Search for an Honest Quisling,” *Ramparts*, December 1974-January 1975.
- [68](#). “Philippines: A government that needs U.S. business,” *Business Week*, 4 November 1972.
- [69](#). See the three-part series in the *New York Times* by Fox Butterfield, “Power of Philippine Ruler Growing,” (1 January 1977); “Marcos Facing Criticism May End \$1 Billion Westinghouse Contract,” (14 January 1977); “Manila Inner Circle Gains Under Marcos,” (15 January 1977). (See chapter 4, section 3.)
- [70](#). Daniel Kirk, “The Bold Words of Kim,” *New York Times Magazine* (7 January 1973), p. 56.
- [71](#). “Yes, yes, it’s graft. But don’t fight.” *New York Times* (24 February 1977).
- [72](#). “Exporting Military-Economic Development—America and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-67,” in Malcolm Caldwell, ed., *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, Spokesman, 1975, p. 219.
- [73](#). Michael T. Kaufman, “Zaire: A Mobutu Fiefdom Where Fortunes Shift Quickly,” *New York Times* (3 June 1978).
- [74](#). John Stockwell, former chief of the CIA Angola Task Force, pointed out in his letter of resignation from the CIA that the decision of the Angolan government to permit “Zairian exiles to invade the Shaba province of Zaire” could hardly have been a surprise: “I myself warned the Interagency Working Group in October, 1975 that the Zairian invasion of northern Angola would be answered by the introduction of large numbers of Cuban troops...and would invite an eventual retaliatory invasion of Zaire from Angola” *Washington Post* (10 April 1977). The background was conveniently forgotten when the predicted retaliation took place. Carter’s attempt to make the Cubans the villains of the piece was inept and dishonest demagoguery, reminiscent of Johnson’s effort to have the U.S. embassy in Santo Domingo scout up some names of Communists to provide a rationale for the U.S. invasion. As for Angola itself, Stockwell states that the United States moved into Angola before the USSR and intervened steadily (and ineptly) thereafter. *In Search of Enemies*, pp. 66-67 and passim. Stockwell also notes that subsequent Cuban intervention was consistent with its ideology and international stance, while ours, as was so often the case, “was a direct contradiction of our public policies [more accurately, the proclaimed public policies], making it essential that we keep the American public [and also the Congress] from

knowing the truth” (p. 171).

[75.](#) Stockwell, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

[76.](#) According to Eric Pace, “In Iran, It’s Alms to the Poor and the Rich,” *New York Times* (26 September 1976), section F.

[77.](#) See Robert Graham, “The Pahlavi Foundation,” *Nation*, 9 December 1978.

[78.](#) See Fred Cook, “The Billion Dollar Mystery,” *Nation*, 12 April 1965.

[79.](#) Reportedly helped along by the display in front of the Royal Court, by the wife of the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Navy, of a diamond valued at more than a million dollars. See Eric Rouleau, “Iran—Myths and Realities,” *Le Monde* (3-4 October 1976).

[80.](#) *Ibid.*

[81.](#) Flora Lewis, “Shah of Iran Forbids Royal Family To Make Profits on Business Deals,” *New York Times* (4 July 1978).

[82.](#) Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-90.

[83.](#) This was also true in Guatemala, Iran, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Zaire, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

[84.](#) Malcolm Browne, *The New Face of War*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1965, p. 211. See further below, chapter 5.

[85.](#) This is the effective meaning of Communism for the neo-fascist elites that the United States has sponsored in Latin America and elsewhere. (See below, chapter 4, section 5.1.)

[86.](#) Entirely outside of the club is, of course, the majority of the population, terrorized into passivity in the interest of “the club elite,” and clearly irrelevant except as a cheap labor force or threat to “stability.”

[87.](#) Stephen Sansweet and William Blundell, “On the Give: For U.S. Firms Abroad Bribery Can Often Be Routine Business Cost,” *Wall Street Journal* (9 May 1975).

[88.](#) The Brazilian military began to feed on itself in the 1970s. “Twenty percent of the field officers had been removed from their posts for ideological deviation by 1973, and in 1975 eleven army officers were arrested for ‘studying literature from the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement’.” Black, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

[89.](#) Human slavery also lasted quite a long time in the Western democracies, not to speak

of vicious exploitation, imported cheap labor, and other admirable practices, which still are prevalent.

[90](#). William McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, Chicago, 1963, pp. 256-57.

[91](#). *Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad*. Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 21 December 1970, p. 3.

[92](#). The United States was, in fact, bombing the only major rail connection between southwestern China and the rest of China, which happened to pass through Vietnam near Hanoi. The dispatch of Chinese technicians to help restore rail service was offered in the U.S. press as another example of Chinese aggressiveness. As we now know, official U.S. policy enunciated in 1954 involved a readiness to use force against China if China was regarded by the U.S. leadership as the “external source” of local subversion or rebellion in Southeast Asia. For discussion of the relevant documents, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973, p. 100f.

[93](#). See note 22 above.

[94](#). Drew Fethersten and John Cummings, “Canadian Says U.S. Paid Him \$5,000 to Infect Cuban Poultry,” *Washington Post (Newsday)* (21 March 1977), p. A18; this report states that “The major details of the Canadian’s story have been confirmed by sources within and outside the American intelligence community.” Fethersten and Cummings, “CIA tied to Cuba’s ’71 pig fever outbreak,” *Boston Globe (Newsday)* (9 January 1977): “With at least the tacit backing of Central Intelligence Agency officials, operatives linked to anti-Castro terrorists introduced African swine fever virus into Cuba in 1971. Six weeks later an outbreak of the disease forced the slaughter of 500,000 pigs to prevent a nationwide animal epidemic.” This “was the first and only time the disease has hit the Western Hemisphere” and “was labeled the ‘most alarming event’ of 1971 by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.” All production of pork came to a halt for several months. “A U.S. intelligence source said in an interview that he was given the virus in a sealed, unmarked container” at Ft. Gulick, the U.S. Army and CIA base in the Panama Canal Zone. See also UPI, “CIA reportedly tried to dry up Cuban crop,” *Boston Globe* (27 June 1976), reporting the allegation by a former Pentagon researcher that the CIA and the Pentagon seeded clouds “to try to dry up the Cuban sugar crop in 1969 and 1970” (denied by the Pentagon; cf. *Globe*, 28 June 1976). On the background, see Taylor Branch and George Crile III, “The Kennedy Vendetta, How the CIA waged a silent war against Cuba,” *Harper’s*, August 1975, reporting attempts as late as 1964 by the CIA, under the

original orders of President Kennedy, to land weapons and destroy oil refineries, railroad bridges, sugar mills and other targets, many successfully attacked.

- [95.](#) David Binder, “Carter Says Cubans May Leave Angola, Is Receptive on Ties,” *New York Times* (17 February 1977).
- [96.](#) It is, for example, no surprise that the *Washington Post* (24 February 1978) can feature (in a special box) a letter to the editor from a reader who writes:
- I wasn’t all that bothered when it turned out that the CIA had tried to poison Lumumba’s toothpaste and contaminate Castro’s diving suit with itching powder. The cold war always seemed to be a humorless comedy of errors anyway...[But I]...find it disconcerting to read that within the space of several weeks the CIA has published two contradictory estimates of Saudi Arabia’s capacity to produce oil.
- [97.](#) For discussion of media handling of the Cambodia issue, and the factual context, see Volume II, chapter 6.
- [98.](#) See the discussion of East Timor in chapter 3, section 5.4.
- [99.](#) See especially the discussion below of the press treatment of human rights issues in Indonesia, Thailand, and the numerous subfascist clients of the U.S. in Latin America in chapters 3 and 4. We turn to the media treatment of the Communist states in Volume II.
- [100.](#) Terror and repression are real enough, but the terms, in Free World jargon, are typically used to include, for example, the suffering of those who are starving in regions where farming is next to impossible because draught animals have been killed by bombing, the land is littered with lethal unexploded ordnance and cratered by saturation bombing, and much of the labor force has been killed, injured or disabled by malnutrition and disease. Particularly in the case of Cambodia, the U.S. bombing from 1969, the U.S.-ARVN invasion of 1970, and the ferocious bombing of 1973, at a time when it was surely understood in Washington that the war in Cambodia was lost, have large-scale (and predicted) effects with regard to starvation, disease, and retribution killings. (See Volume II, chapter 6, for details.)
- [101.](#) If they deviate ever so slightly, they face serious problems. To cite one example, consider *Business Week*’s report (30 August 1976) that the *New York Times* has “slid precipitously to the left and has become stridently antibusiness in tone, ignoring the fact that the *Times* itself is a business—and one with very serious problems” (the concept of the *Times* sliding to the left, precipitously or even perceptibly, is so ludicrous as to suggest that irony was intended until one realizes how remarkably skewed the general spectrum of opinion is in the United States as compared with other

industrial democracies). One example of “the paper’s political swing to the left” was an editorial recommending an increase in taxes on business to help overcome the city’s financial problems. “‘Something like that,’ muses a Wall Street analyst, ‘could put the *Times* right out of business’.” How? An accompanying remark supplies part of the answer: “Following a *Times* series on medical incompetence,” a magazine run by the parent company “lost \$500,000 in pharmaceutical advertising.” In short, the *Times* had better remember that it too is a business. On the impact of these warnings, see James Aronson, “The *Times* is a-changing,” *In These Times*, 2 March 1977. Such overt pressures to prevent even the most minuscule departure from right-wing orthodoxy are rare, because the necessity rarely arises; but the threat is ever-present. For similar reasons, corporate managers need not be admonished that their role is to maximize profits.

[102](#). Eric Barnouw, *The Sponsor*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 127, 119.

[103](#). “Where are you Mr. Chairman,” *Chief Executive Magazine*, July-September 1977.

[104](#). Barnouw describes the commercial failure of an NBC weekly on ecology, “In Which We Live,” launched in May 1970 to depict various environmental hazards. It was abruptly ended the following month, having failed to attract much advertising, although ecology was then a hot topic for shows and commercials. Barnouw comments: “Since their [commercials and companies] message was one of reassurance, they apparently did not regard an NBC documentary series focusing on problems as a suitable vehicle” (*op. cit.*, p. 135).

[105](#). See Edward J. Epstein, *News From Nowhere*, Random House, 1973, pp. 72-75.

[106](#). See chapter 3, section 4.4.

[107](#). Thus Anthony Lewis joins with William Buckley in deploring the nastiness of the Soviets, the need to bring pressure on them, the foolishness of Andrew Young in drawing comparisons to the United States, etc. Liberals who join the chorus of protest over the Shcharansky-Ginzburg trials do not, however, note how curious it is to focus such unique attention on the plight of Russian dissidents in a world where literally thousands are incarcerated, tortured, or assassinated without even the mockery of a trial in the U.S. client states. Comparisons of the Shcharansky trial with that of David Truong and Ronald Humphries have been sparse indeed considering the important similarities between them. Another similar case that was ignored—or worse—is that of Sami Esmail, a U.S. citizen who had the temerity to try to visit his dying father in

Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. He was arrested by Israeli police and during “interrogation” produced a “confession” (under duress, he alleges). On the basis of this “confession,” he was sentenced to 15 months in prison just prior to the Shcharansky-Ginzburg trials that aroused such indignation in the U.S. The crime extracted from him by the Israeli interrogators was to have visited Libya and taken part in “terrorist training” and to have been a member of an Arab guerrilla organization. He was also charged with having worked with Palestinian groups in the United States. No act of any kind was alleged. The court president “said the sentence had to be sufficient to act as a deterrent in view of attempts by Palestinian organizations to recruit supporters on American campuses” (*New York Times* 13 June 1978). None of this arouses any protest in the U.S. mainstream, where all sorts of punitive actions are urged against the Soviets but not against the recipient of about half of total U.S. military aid. Rather, it elicits the kind of apologetics that one recalls from the worst days of Stalinism; cf. Monroe H. Freedman and Alan M. Dershowitz, *New York Times* (2 June 1978)—neatly timed to appear just before the conviction. Worse yet, *New York Times* editorialists conclude on the authority of these apologists that the trial was “eminently fair” (11 June 1978); and in a spirit of collegiality, the *Washington Post* reported on May 29 that the two law professors “witnessed the trial and thought it was fair,” sure proof, since they are “well-known for their civil libertarian views” (in fact, Dershowitz in particular is well-known for his scandalous and often libelous attacks on political prisoners in Israel and on Israeli civil libertarians, including quite outrageous falsehoods; but it is true that he is a civil libertarian on domestic issues, exactly as was true of his Stalinist counterparts). Not content with a “news report,” the *Post* also devoted an editorial to the conclusions of the two “civil libertarians” (5 June 1978), and another news story on June 8 referring to the Freedman-Dershowitz report, which was hailed by the Israeli press as well. The *Post* cites a *Jerusalem Post* editorial: “a fuller vindication of Israel’s system of justice...would be hard to imagine.”

The fact that Esmail “confessed” should come as no surprise. Observers have noted a remarkably high rate of confessions by Arab prisoners under interrogation. Asked to explain this curious fact, Israeli Supreme Court Justice Moshe Etzioni said in London: “The Arabs in any case—if they are arrested—do not take much time before they confess. It’s part of their nature” (*Amnesty International Newsletter*, September 1977). Nothing here to disturb well-known civil libertarians.

[108](#). For some discussion of the propagandistic use of this gambit, see chapter 5, section 2. See also Edward S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam*, Pilgrim, 1970, chapter 4; and Tran

Van Dinh, "Fear of a Bloodbath," *New Republic*, 6 December 1969.

[109](#). For example, John P. Roche, a long-time liberal apologist for U.S. aggression in Indochina, now writes: "I only regret the government of the United States repudiated its objectives and created the present Asian Auschwitz in Indochina." The "objectives" to which he is referring are explicitly those of 1967, i.e., to maintain U.S. control over South Vietnam (or in official translation: the "independence" of South Vietnam). Thus Roche is asserting that South Vietnam is an "Asian Auschwitz." The facts are as relevant to this distinguished thinker, now acting dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University, as they have always been in the past.

The occasion for Roche's remarks was the disclosure by Richard Dudman that Roche had connived with Lyndon Johnson in 1967 to organize an allegedly independent prestigious pro-war group, with the White House role hidden. This chicanery not only served their political purposes, but also allowed the acting dean of the School of Law and Diplomacy to defraud the government by obtaining some \$200,000 in tax-deductible contributions on the pretense that the purpose of the group that was secretly organized and sponsored by the government was "to make inquiry into the nonpartisan fundamentals of American foreign policy and to conduct educational activities in connection therewith; and to promote and contribute to a broad-based, nonpartisan public debate about Vietnam and related matters"—which would, as secret documents disclose, include only people who "share the same fundamental [pro-war] outlook." The White House lied outright about its role. Roche has no comment on any of this, except to say that the committee "was a first-rate outfit organized in a good cause," namely, to prevent the Asian Auschwitz which has since been created by the United States in South Vietnam. *Nation*, 23 December 1978.

[110](#). "Signing 100,000 Death Warrants," *Wall Street Journal* (26 March 1975). Hosmer wrote that "one could expect a 'bloodbath' of very large proportions," with hardly fewer than 100,000 executions and possibly many more if the Vietcong "fostered" the kind of grass roots violence characteristic of the North Vietnamese land reform. Stephen P. Hosmer, *Viet Cong Repression and Its Implications for the Future* (Rand), 1970, pp. 117, 122. The forecast was erroneous, as was the suggestion that the DRV "fostered" grass roots violence in the land reform period (see chapter 5, section 2.2). Grass roots violence was indeed fostered in Indonesia and Chile; it is interesting to see how often propagandists transfer to the enemy the uglier features of their own state.

[111](#). Max Lerner, "Flaps and rights," *New York Post* (4 February 1977).

- [112](#). For discussion of these matters see N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Pantheon, 1969; *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973; “Human Rights” and *American Foreign Policy*, Spokesman, 1978. During the late 1960s, under the impact of the peace movement and the student movement, ideological controls were somewhat relaxed, but as these pressures waned, they are being reinstituted, though not quite with the earlier effectiveness, since the consequences of the slightly greater openness of the intervening period are difficult to erase completely.
- [113](#). See Thomas C. Cochran, *Business in American Life: a History*, McGraw-Hill, 1972, especially chapter 19. Also see Alex Carey and Trudy Korber, *Propaganda and Democracy in America*, forthcoming. On the educational system, see Joel H. Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*, Beacon, 1972.

3 Benign Terror

- [1](#). See chapter 1, note 53.
- [2](#). See chapter 5, sections 1.1, 2.1.
- [3](#). *Fiscal Year 1970 AID Report to the Ambassador*, p. 35.
- [4](#). *New York Times* (20 December 1967).
- [5](#). To use the classic language of Ithiel de Sola Pool on the requirements for the maintenance of order on a world-wide scale, in “The Public and the Polity,” (in Pool, ed.), *Contemporary Political Science: Toward Empirical Theory*, McGraw Hill, 1967, p. 26.
- [6](#). “Stability” is used almost invariably by U.S. officials in an Orwellian sense, synonymous with a set of economic and political arrangements satisfactory to U.S. imperial interests. Thus for the period 1949-69 Thailand represented “stability,” China a source of “instability”.
- [7](#). In the case of Brazil, for example, “A hard policy of domestic repression has a politicized national life making it practically impossible for the lower classes to become socially conscious of their plight or to organize for change.” Agostino Bono, “Unjolly Green Giant,” *Commonweal*, 2 February 1973. They need change desperately, however. See “Torture, murder, hunger in Brazil,” *The Guardian* (Manchester) (19 May 1973).
- [8](#). Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism*, Little, Brown, 1977, p. 7.
- [9](#). *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.

10. We rely here on the account by A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors*, Pantheon, 1978, chapter 6. Quotes are from Langguth.
11. J. Bowyer Bell, "Terrorist scripts and live-action spectacles," *Columbia Journalism Review*, May-June 1978.
12. J. Anthony Lukas, *Don't Shoot—We Are Your Children!*, Random House, 1971.
13. Apologetics for torture among the U.S. intelligentsia are, of course, already implicit in their support and cover-up for the torture regimes in the U.S. sphere of influence; we refer here to explicit justification for torture.
14. One might inquire into the question how the state that is so abjectly served by the *New Republic* has chosen to answer this question, in its own internal practice. Its Prime Minister is the former leader of a terrorist group that was responsible for a long series of atrocities: bombs in Arab market places, blowing up buildings, massacres by armed thugs in villages, etc. The Speaker of the Knesset was a commander of the group that assassinated UN Mediator Folke Bernadotte among other atrocities. The recently appointed Secretary-General of the Jewish Agency is a man who murdered several dozen Arab civilians under guard in an undefended Lebanese village during the land-clearing operations of October 1948—he was sentenced to 7 years in prison but quickly amnestied, then granted a second amnesty which "denies the punishment and the charge as well," and later granted a lawyer's license by the Israeli Legal Council on grounds that his act carried "no stigma." *Al-Hamishmar* (3 March 1978).
15. Seth Kaplan, "Torture Tempest," *New Republic*, 23 July 1977. On the *London Sunday Times* report, see chapter 2, note 15; see also chapter 2, note 107.
16. There are exceptions. For the early stages, see particularly Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: 1929-1939*, Frank Cass, 1977, the second volume of an outstanding study by an Israeli scholar that discusses the sources of the 1936-39 rebellion, largely involving poorer sectors in regions of heavy Jewish colonization, after all other measures for redress of grievances had failed. See also David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977; Kenneth Love, *Suez: The Twice-Fought War*, McGraw-Hill, 1969.
17. "The Argentine situation concerning human rights," September 1978.
18. Jeffrey A. Tannenbaum, "The Terrorists: For World's Alienated, Violence Often Reaps Political Recognition," *Wall Street Journal* (4 January 1977).

- [19.](#) See “Rightist Terror Stirs Argentina,” 29 August 1976, and “Argentina’s Terror: Army Is Ahead,” 2 January 1977. (See also chapter 4, section 5.)
- [20.](#) T.D. Allman, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 May 1970.
- [21.](#) Charles Meyer, *Derrière le sourire Khmer*, Plon, 1971, p. 405. Meyer, a long-time French resident of Cambodia and advisor to Sihanouk, remained for a time after the March 1970 coup. His book was never published in the United States, nor was it reviewed, in striking contrast to the treatment of French studies of Cambodian atrocities. (See Volume II, chapter 6.)
- [22.](#) The 1969 bombings were kept “secret” in the United States until mid-1973 in part through the complicity of the press. (See Volume II, chapter 6.) But they were known, at least to a degree. Cf. Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, Pantheon, 1970, pp. 122-23.
- [23.](#) Nixon Press Conference, 12 November 1971, *New York Times* (13 November 1971).
- [24.](#) See Volume II, chapter 6.
- [25.](#) *Ibid.*
- [26.](#) The “aggression from the North” thesis of the Johnson administration, for example, was devastated quickly by analyses of the White Paper of 1965, two of the best being I.F. Stone, “A Reply to the White Paper,” *I.F. Stone’s Weekly* (8 March 1965), and the editors of *The New Republic*, “White Paper on Vietnam” (13 March 1965). None of these made a dent on the typical editorial, news article, column, or presentation of Administration handouts, however. Even after the *Pentagon Papers* release, which vindicated the hardest of hard-line dove analyses of aggression (locating it firmly in Washington, D.C.), the mythical truth held firm. (See chapter 5; and also Volume II, chapter 1.)
- [27.](#) The Hue massacre, which was subject to early and effective challenge as a propaganda fabrication, was almost uniformly portrayed in the mass media as firmly established truth. The better papers would *occasionally* allow critics of the myth a few paragraphs of space for rebuttal, but on pages reserved for opinion. The government-approved version, in contrast, was presented on pages devoted to “news,” i.e., “fact.” (See chapter 5, section 2.3.)
- [28.](#) Sidney Hook, “The Knight of the Double Standard,” *The Humanist* (January 1971).
- [29.](#) In reviewing the impact of the war, Wendell S. Merrick and James N. Wallace concede that “a great many Vietnamese suffered terribly,” but note judiciously that “these

effects of war would have occurred with or without Americans being here.” *U.S. News and World Report* (2 April 1973).

[30.](#) William F. Buckley, Jr. *Boston Globe* (23 April 1973).

[31.](#) See Vietnam Veterans Against the War, eds., *Winter Soldier Investigation*, Beacon Press, 1972; *The Dellums Committee Hearing on War Crimes in Vietnam*, Vintage, 1972; James S. Kunen, *Standard Operating Procedure*, Avon, 1971; D. Thorne and G. Butler, eds., *The New Soldier*, Collier, 1971; James Duffett, ed., *Against the Crime of Silence, Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal*, O’Hare Books, 1968.

[32.](#) *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 March 1973. On torture in the Saigon prisons, see Holmes Brown and Don Luce, *Hostages of War*, Indochina Mobile Education Project, 1973. (See chapter 5, section 1.)

[33.](#) *New York Times* editorial (8 April 1973). The *New York Times* meanwhile blandly reported U.S. violations of the Geneva Conventions without notice or comment. (See chapter 1, note 85.)

[34.](#) On the interesting concept of “internal aggression,” which refers to activities by local forces against governments placed in power by the United States and its allies, see Noam Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973, pp. 114ff.

[35.](#) Quoted in Jan K. Black, *United States Penetration of Brazil*, University of Pennsylvania, 1977, p. 143.

[36.](#) Frederick Nunn, “Military Professionalism and Professional Militarism in Brazil, 1870-1970,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 4, n. 1 (1972), quoted in Black, *op. cit.*, p. 194. On this issue, see further Black, pp. 179-199.

[37.](#) “The Marginalization of A People, The Cry of the Churches,” signed by Six Brazilian Church Bishops and Archbishops, 6 May 1973. IDOC, *International Documentation*, no. 65, p. 59.

[38.](#) Bishop Dom Pedro Casaldaliga, “The Gospel Is My Weapon,” 12 October 1975, *Latin America Press* (6 November 1975).

[39.](#) “I Have Heard the Cry of my People,” a statement signed by 18 Catholic religious leaders of Northeast Brazil, 6 May 1973, IDOC translation and reprint, p. 43.

[40.](#) E. Bradford Burns, “Brazil: The Imitative Society,” *The Nation*, 10 July 1972, quoted in Black, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

- [41.](#) Konrad Kellen, “1971 and Beyond: The View From Hanoi,” Rand Corporation (June 1971), pp. 14-15.
- [42.](#) The flavor of “our” South Vietnam may be captured, however, in the finding by one former AID employee: “I have personally witnessed poor urban people literally quaking with fear when I questioned them about the activity of the secret police in a post election campaign. One poor fisherman in Da Nang, animated and talkative in complaining about economic conditions, clammed up in near terror when queried about the police....” Theodore Jacqueney, Hearings before Subcommittee of House Committee on Government Operations, *U.S. Assistance Programs in Vietnam* (July-August 1971), p. 251.
- [43.](#) Cf. *For Reasons of State*, p. 96.
- [44.](#) Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy*, Stackpole, 1967, p. 373. Fall is often regarded as an opponent of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. This is inaccurate. He was a bitter anti-Communist and a strong supporter of the goals of the U.S. intervention, though he was later to be appalled at the methods used, and feared that Vietnam would not survive this terroristic onslaught. The simple answer he gives in the text fails to come to grips with *why* the West systematically gravitated to regimes without popular support.
- [45.](#) John P. Lewis, *New York Times*, Op-Ed, (9 December 1971).
- [46.](#) *New York Times* (9 January 1972).
- [47.](#) On this matter see the illuminating analysis by Eqbal Ahmad, “Notes on South Asia in Crisis,” *Bulletin of the Concerned Asian Scholars* (1972), vol. 4, no. 1.
- [48.](#) “Purely internal” is also used by U.S. officials in an Orwellian sense, meaning not so threatening to our perceived interests as to demand intervention. Thus the Pakistan instance, or the case of Thailand where “the general tendency of most Americans [sic] was to declare that the ruthless suppression of political opposition by the military leaders [who, as we will see, were a product and on the payroll of the U.S.] was a purely internal affair.” Frank C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, Public Affairs Press, 1965, p. 129; for some years Darling was a CIA analyst specializing in Southeast Asia, Thailand in particular. In contrast, the NLF’s “aggression” in South Vietnam was clearly an “external affair”.
- [49.](#) *New York Times* (9 January 1972).
- [50.](#) The quotation, from a government official who followed internal cable reports from

Burundi, is taken from Michael Bowen, Gary Freedman, Kay Miller and Roger Morris, *Passing By, The United States and Genocide in Burundi*, 1972, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (undated), p. 5. This document is referred to hereafter as *Passing By*. The Hutu constituted 85 percent of the population of Burundi, but have been ruled by the fourteen percent Tutsi minority since the 16th century.

[51.](#) Quoted from *Passing By*, p. 6.

[52.](#) On 14 July 1973 the *New York Times* brought up the subject again in a front page article by Charles Mohr entitled “Exiles Keeping Strife in Burundi Alive.” As suggested by the title itself, the article starts out with, and features heavily, the subversive activities of “militant Hutu refugees” allegedly trying to overthrow “the predominantly Tutsi Government.” A “major factor” in the Burundi tragedy is the “passionately militant Hutu students in exile,” who have disturbed the “relative quiet in recent days after a serious out-break of incidents [sic] in mid-May in which, it is said, thousands of Hutus were slain.” Later in the article Mohr discussed further the number of Hutus killed, but finds the matter inconclusive (Tutsis were killed also), and passes on quickly to the disruptive behavior of the Hutu students and refugees. According to the Carnegie study the Burundi government itself admitted to 80,000 casualties, and “the State Department had authoritative intelligence that the death toll in Burundi was two to three times that number.” *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

[53.](#) See the 23 June 1972 hearings on the confirmation of Robert L. Yost, excerpted in *Passing By*, pp. 35-37.

[54.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[55.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17.

[56.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19, 31-33.

[57.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[58.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[59.](#) In Richard Arens, ed., *Genocide in Paraguay*, Temple University Press, 1976. Unless otherwise indicated, references below (through note 67) are to articles in this collection.

[60.](#) The leading Paraguayan specialist on the Indians, Professor Miguel Chase Sardi, who had worked courageously to defend them and make their plight known, was imprisoned in December 1975, terminating the Indian aid project that he had headed. He and others arrested were tortured. Asked if the U.S. government could call a halt to the torture, the

State Department responded that no steps could be taken.

61. The term “Guayaki,” meaning something like “rabid rat,” is used as a term of racist contempt for the Aché. See Mark Münzel’s article in the Arens collection. The reservation to which the Aché have been driven to die is called the “National Guayaki Colony.” It is, Wolf comments, not really a reservation or even a prison, but “an extermination camp.”
62. Richard Arens, “Death Camps in Paraguay,” *Inquiry*, 2 January 1978. This article was based on a personal visit to Paraguay by Arens in August and September 1977.
63. This Director of Indian Affairs was subsequently identified in eye-witness affidavits filed by Arens for the Aché in the UN as trafficking in female slaves—but although Arens addressed a UN Subcommittee on this subject on behalf of the British Anti-Slavery Society, the only media interest in the matter was in Western Europe.
64. Even an offer by Arens to underwrite the hospital costs of one dying child with a widespread cancer that had been ignored by reservation officials for 18 months could not prevent the child’s removal from the hospital within a few days by the reservation authorities. See “Death Camps in Paraguay.”
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. The curious role of the International League for Human Rights also deserves some comment. Though quite willing to organize press conferences on human rights violations attributed to enemies of the United States (e.g., Vietnam), the League has refused to do so in the case of the Paraguayan Indians. Richard Arens, a member of the League’s board of directors, has exerted strenuous but vain efforts to induce the League to overcome its reticence in this regard. The League ignored the condemnation of Paraguay for the mistreatment and enslavement of the Indians by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights in June 1977, and while under Arens’s prodding it requested and obtained a place on the UN agenda for consideration of abuse of the Indians, no publicity was given this development. Had the League pressed the issue prior to the last Congressional appropriations bill, Paraguay might have been deprived of aid. The State Department, however, supported the Paraguayan appropriations and in fact used League documents in support of its position. (We are indebted to Richard Arens for this information.) League press conferences on Vietnam also comport well with U.S. policy. It is perhaps non-coincidental that the State Department is usually

represented at meetings of the board of the League and that its former Executive-Director, Roberta Cohen, is now an employee of the State Department.

The relations of the League to U.S. government policy deserve a closer study, in our view. It is striking, for example, to compare the way in which the League treats evidence concerning alleged repression and atrocities in Vietnam or Russia and statements by officials of these enemy regimes, with its treatment of the prime recipient of U.S. aid, Israel. For a detailed commentary on the latter topic, see “Noam Chomsky on International League for Human Rights: And Israeli Human Rights Violations,” *Palestine Human Rights Bulletin*, no. 2, pp. 1-5, 30 August 1977. To cite only one instance, the International League disaffiliated its Israeli branch when the Israeli government attempted to take it over in an effort so clumsy that it was blocked by an Israeli Court that expressed extraordinary hostility to the Israeli affiliate. Despite repeated appeals, the League has refused to reverse this action, which is on a par with disaffiliation of a Russian branch on the sole grounds that it comes under state attack.

[68.](#) Amnesty International *Report on Torture*, 1974, p. 216.

[69.](#) *Human Rights Reports*, prepared by The Department of State, submitted to the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, March 1977, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1977; *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Report submitted to the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives and Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, by The Department of State, 3 February 1978, Government Printing Office, 1978.

[70.](#) Robert J. Smith and Bartomeu Melia,” Genocide of Aché-Guayaki?,” *Survival International Supplement*, June 1978, p. 12.

[71.](#) Arens in his discussions with U.S. embassy personnel in Asuncion came away with the clear impression that the embassy staff saw Stroessner as a vital element of stability in South America and that there had been no change from the policies of past administrations in supporting Stroessner as a “friend”.

[72.](#) Penny Lernoux, “Apartheid Sails West: White Africans in Latin America,” *Nation*, 23 September 1978.

[73.](#) While these charges are common in Latin America, we know of no evidence to support them. The real problems are much deeper, relating to the missionary role, conscious or inadvertent, in preparing the ground for the kind of “assimilation” of the

Indians that often leads to destructive or even genocidal consequences. See *Christian Mission for the Empire*, NACLA, December 1973, for discussion; and Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, eds. *God is an American: The Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, in preparation, for extensive study of this topic.

In an interview in the cited NACLA study, Doug Hostetter, formerly a Mennonite missionary in Vietnam, notes CIA efforts to use Wycliffe (SIL) missionaries, which were rebuffed, though he reports that missionaries often intentionally or casually gave information to the CIA (“An Insider’s Story: Religious Agencies in Vietnam”). See Volume II, chapter 4 for some comment on the role of the church in Indochina.

74. See chapter 4, section 5. From the earliest stages of colonization, religion has served as a cloak for pillage, torture and massacre. See Hans Koning, *Columbus: His Enterprise*, Monthly Review Press, 1976.
75. Cited from *Translation*, October-December 1971, in Laurie Hart, “Story of the Wycliffe Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers,” in *Christian Mission for the Empire*.
76. *Washington Post* (12 September 1978). Kraft is thinking specifically of Iran, where so far the “supersleuths” whose dangerous influence so worries Kraft have not prevented the country from virtually sinking into the sea under the weight of U.S. armaments, and where the application of “human rights principles” could not be discerned with an electron microscope. But it is never too early to issue a warning, reaffirmed, the same day, by the *Post* editorial.
77. Shelton H. Davis, *Victims of the Miracle*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. xi. Davis is an anthropologist who has taught in Brazil and done ethnographic work elsewhere in Latin America, and was a founder of the documentation and information center INDIGENA which is concerned with native Americans.
78. One might add that attempts to seek protection for victims of torture evoke similar consequences—for the fortunate, trials rather than death squads. As we write, trials are beginning before a military court for nine civilians accused “of leaking information in 1969 on torture in Brazilian prisons.” The information merits nine lines in the *Boston Globe* (1 October 1978). The Shcharansky-Ginzburg trials in the USSR, in contrast, were a major international incident only a few months earlier. (See chapter 1, section 9.)
79. Pp. 156-57, cited by Davis from the *Los Angeles Times* (5 April 1973).

[80](#). For background, see Helen Hill, *The Timor Story*, Timor Information Service, 183 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, Vic., 3065, Australia, second edition, undated, running through 1975. The story is carried forward in James S. Dunn, *East Timor—from Portuguese Colonialism to Indonesian Incorporation*, Parliament of Australia, the Parliamentary Library, Legislative Research Service, 14 September 1977; henceforth: *Dunn Report*. There is an illuminating study concentrating primarily on the crucial period before the Indonesian invasion by Jill Jolliffe: *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism*, University of Queensland Press (Australia), 1978; Prentice-Hall. Jolliffe was one of the few Western journalists in East Timor from September 1975 until December 2, when Australians were evacuated because of the impending Indonesian invasion. See also Richard W. Franke, *East Timor: The Hidden War*, East Timor Defense Committee, P.O. Box 251, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10010, second edition, December 1976; and *Decolonization*, publication of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, No. 7, August 1976, *Issue on East Timor*. For a rare if not unique review in the U.S. media, see Arnold S. Kohen, “Human Rights in Indonesia,” *Nation*, 26 November 1977. See also *Indonesian Intervention in East Timor: A Chronology*, updated edition, 10 April 1977, East Timor Information and Research Project and Cornell East Timor Association, 410 Stewart Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850. Important information and documents also appear in Marcel Roger, *Timor Oriental*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 1977.

See also the hearings of the Fraser subcommittee: *Human Rights in East Timor and the Question of the Use of U.S. Equipment by the Indonesian Armed Forces*, 23 March 1977—henceforth, *March Hearings*; *Human Rights in East Timor*, 28 June and 19 July 1977—henceforth, *June-July Hearings*; *U.S. Policy on Human Rights and Military Assistance: Overview and Indonesia*, 15 February, 1978—henceforth, *February 1978 Hearings*. These were hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, chaired by Rep. Donald M. Fraser, whose record throughout was consistently honorable, in marked contrast to most of his colleagues.

We are very much indebted to Kohen, Franke, Sue Nichterlein, Richard Tanter, and the information groups in the U.S. and Australia for access to material on East Timor. Their dedicated and futile efforts merely highlight the complicity of the media in the West, specifically the United States, in ongoing atrocities.

[81](#). Shepard Forman, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, who lived

with mountain people in Timor in 1973-74, *June-July Hearings*, p. 15.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 18f. Corroborative testimony appears in the same hearings from Elizabeth Traube, professor at Wesleyan University, who spent 2 years in other mountain areas of East Timor from 1972 to 1974.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

84. *Decolonization*, p. 9, citing “observers” and UN and Australian studies. Much the same is reported quite generally. See the sources cited in note 80.

85. Robin Osborne, *Australian*, 26 February 1975, cited by Jolliffe, p. 90.

86. *Decolonization*, p. 10. Dunn notes that most of the FRETILIN leaders “remained devout practising Catholics”; he refers to the party as “populist Catholic” (*March Hearings*, p. 27). He also points out that “from the outset they were at pains to dissociate the party from communist ideology and movements” (*Dunn Report*, p. 26), a point stressed by all informed observers, relevant here only because of Indonesian claims to the contrary, commonly repeated in the U.S. press, as we will see.

87. *Decolonization*, p. II. Again, this judgment seems unanimous apart from Indonesian propaganda.

88. Apologists have pointed out that collaboration with the Japanese was not untypical among Third World nationalists, but this claim, while accurate, is irrelevant here, given the Timorese resistance to the Japanese conquest and the massive Japanese atrocities. It is quite appropriate to describe Araújo as a collaborator in Japanese war crimes.

89. The Deputy Governor of this “Provisional Government,” his immediate subordinate, was Lopes da Cruz, “the only UDT leader regarded as reliable by the Indonesians,” who had in fact been placed under house arrest by other UDT leaders “for his virulently pro-Indonesian views” in August 1975 (Jolliffe, p. 272). He was later to be cited as an authority by the *New York Times*. (See pp. 191-92.)

90. *Decolonization*, p. 19. Dunn, who headed the Australian team, gives slightly lower estimates.

91. Quoted by Hill, *op. cit.*, p. II, from an Australian TV interview with the pilot.

92. There is no reference to the fact that the only doctor had been forced to leave by the Portuguese at gunpoint, so FRETILIN sources claim, according to Stone.

93. Here is another example of *New York Times* editing. In his original story, Stone

describes both the UDT and FRETILIN. “Where the UDT appears to draw its support from the better-educated and more comfortably situated classes, Fretilin has consistently sought its ideology and symbols from the people.” The *New York Times* edits as follows: the UDT “appears to draw support from the better-educated and more well-to-do people in the Portuguese territory.” The reference to FRETILIN is deleted, and of course the *New York Times* spares its readers the obscene word “classes”.

94. On the nature and character of these programs, which were bringing “a number of important changes in the patterns of village life,” see Jolliffe, pp. 100f. She suggests that FRETILIN was coming to identify itself as a “black nationalist movement” at this time (p. 116), and that it was much influenced by developments in Portuguese Africa.

95. *New York Times* (12 August 1975).

96. *Ibid.* Indonesian aspirations were widely recognized. A *London Times* editorial (4 November 1975) noted that “The Indonesians expect Timor to fall into their lap” and predicted that if FRETILIN declared independence and the Portuguese accept it then the Indonesians “would probably mount their own liberation movement.” Months earlier, the *Economist* had reported that “General Suharto and his advisers are reported to be seriously considering a military takeover of Portuguese Timor,” expecting that “Indonesia would not be seriously affected by any international odium that might follow” (15 March 1975)—an apt assessment of Western commitment to freedom and self-determination. In the United States, the *Christian Science Monitor* carried a report on 24 April 1975 (“Indonesia eyes Portuguese colony”) commenting that if a FRETILIN government were to be established “then some observers expect the Indonesians to waste little time in launching a military assault on the Portuguese colony.” There was no lack of similar predictions, which places the pretense of ignorance on the part of U.S. officials in an interesting light.

97. *February 1978 Hearings*, p. 78. Anderson is a specialist on Indonesia and Southeast Asia at Cornell University. Some speculate that elements in the Portuguese administration may also have had a hand in the coup. See Forman’s speculation in his Congressional testimony (*July Hearings*, p. 19) that the UDT coup was “hatched within the whitewashed walls of the colonial administration itself.”

98. *Dunn Report*, pp. 65-66. Dunn had been Australian consul in Portuguese Timor in 1962-64.

99. This was also noted by Stone, *op. cit.*, who remarks that one of the prisoners who was

beaten was a FRETILIN prisoner.

[100](#). Cited from the Security Council record (S/ PV. 1909) in *Decolonization*, p. 24.

[101](#). The letter is reproduced in Jolliffe, p. 66; Roger, p. 27.

[102](#). *Dunn Report*, pp. 37-38.

[103](#). *Ibid.*, pp. 72ff. One of the Timorese who participated in the attack, Jose Martins (President of the right-wing KOTA party), later reported that about 1200 Indonesian troops (six companies) were involved in the attack, supported by tanks. Jolliffe, p. 284.

[104](#). Their reports, and also reports in *Le Monde*, 30 November-1 December, and the *Economist*, 6 December, are cited in *Decolonization*, p. 28. We return to the U.S. press directly.

[105](#). Jolliffe, pp. 177, 186, 201ff. See also *Dunn Report*.

[106](#). *Melbourne Age*, 26 November 1975.

[107](#). Jolliffe, pp. 226-27. A detailed report on the pre-invasion period by David Scott of the Australian aid mission appears in Sue Nichterlein, "The struggle for East Timor: 1976," unpublished ms., 1 June 1977.

[108](#). *June-July Hearings*, p. 37.

[109](#). *Tempo*, 8 July 1978. Reprinted in *Tapol*, November 1978. *Tapol* is the journal of the U.S. Campaign for the Release of Indonesian Political Prisoners, P.O. Box 609, Montclair, N.J. 07042.

[110](#). On Australian intelligence information, see Christopher Sweeney, *Manchester Guardian*, (10 January 1978) reporting from Sydney. On the Australian government cover-up, see Andrew Clark, *National Times* (Australia) (5-10 January 1976).

[111](#). Bruce Juddery, *Canberra Times* (31 May 1976). An accompanying report states that "from late 1974 the Government, or at least the then Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, was being given reports of Indonesian operations intended to result in the incorporation of East Timor."

[112](#). See Lee Lescaze, "U.S. Stopped Aid to Indonesia in '75 Over E. Timor Repression," *Washington Post* (18 March 1977); Reuters, "U.S. Briefly Halted Aid to Jakarta Because of Takeover of East Timor," *New York Times* (18 March 1977). Both of the cited headlines are false.

[113](#). *February 1978 Hearings*, p. 36-37. We omit Anderson's footnote references

documenting these statements.

[114.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 59. The facts were reported by Lenny Siegel, “U.S. officials deny deception on aid,” *In These Times* (26 April-2 May 1978). The mainstream press seems to have shown no interest in the matter.

[115.](#) *February 1978 Hearings*, pp. 60-61.

[116.](#) Jacqui Chagnon, “East Timor and the Congress,” *Tapol*, 15 April 1977. Chagnon was a member of the Human Rights office of Clergy and Laity Concerned.

[117.](#) At that early point in the Indonesian aggression the *Times* did not yet quite have its signals straight. Thus, on 28 December 1975, it published a Reuters dispatch from Darwin, Australia, reporting correctly that FRETILIN had “abandoned the territory’s capital, Dili, to invading Indonesian troops on December 7,” along with an AFP dispatch from Jakarta citing an official Indonesian press agency report “that pro-Indonesian forces had advanced to a line 12 miles south of Dili.” The “pro-Indonesian forces” were, of course, the Indonesian army. If they had advanced 12 miles from the capital by December 27, when this dispatch was filed from Jakarta, they plainly had not seized the entire territory on December 7 as the *Times* had been claiming. The Reuters dispatch cited a radio message from FRETILIN stating, according to the *Times*, that “About 15,000 Indonesian-supported troops are advancing in eastern Timor on mountain strongholds” of FRETILIN. It is highly unlikely that this radio message referred to “Indonesian-supported troops” and no one with the vaguest familiarity with the situation believes that there were 15,000 such troops. No doubt the radio message referred to 15,000 *Indonesian* troops and the *Times* did a bit of re-editing, in its customary way.

According to Australian intelligence sources, the Indonesians landed an additional 15,000-20,000 troops on Christmas Day, 25 December 1975. See Jolliffe, p. 268.

[118.](#) State Department spokesman Robert B. Oakley at the *March Hearings*, p. 16, one of many statements to this effect before and since.

[119.](#) The Indonesian government, not surprisingly, agrees with its U.S. sponsor. The Fourth committee of the UN General Assembly agreed to hear testimony from one of the authors in November 1978 on Indonesian aggression and the services rendered it by the U.S. government and press, over the opposition of the representative of Indonesia, who said “it would serve no useful purpose.” United Nations Press Release, GA/T/2269, 30 November 1978, referring to the decision to grant a hearing to N.

Chomsky (document A/C.4/33/7 Add. 3). See also *Inquiry*, January 1979.

[120.](#) John Hamilton, “Timor toll not the issue: US,” *Melbourne Herald* (7 April 1977).

[121.](#) On the terms under which Indonesia is willing to accept such assistance, see p. 224-25.

[122.](#) Michael Leifer, “Indonesia and the incorporation of East Timor,” *The World Today*, September 1976.

[123.](#) *New York Times*, “Strife-Torn Timor, Short of Food, Asks World Help,” special to the *Times* (15 September 1975).

[124.](#) Andelman, “Jakarta Strives to Keep Foreign Aid; More U.S. Arms and Other Help Due,” Jakarta, *New York Times* (26 November 1975).

[125.](#) November 9, our emphasis. There was in fact no civil war raging, contrary to Indonesian propaganda and its New York outlet. The statement about the five foreigners is also false. The bodies of the five journalists had been identified in propaganda broadcasts of the Indonesian collaborators as “Australian communists” by late October; cf. Jolliffe, p. 234f. (See note 157, this chapter.)

[126.](#) On the selectivity of Western humanitarianism in this regard, see Volume II, chapter 3.

[127.](#) Letter, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 November 1977. On the floor of Congress, Burke has explained that “virulent Marxism” was spreading through East Timor in 1974 in a local struggle “in which inevitably the Government of Indonesia had to involve itself. However, by the time matters were put to rights by the Indonesians and their supporters in East Timor the situation had become a catspaw of Communist conspiracy, designed to embarrass and weaken the Government of Indonesia, erode the necessary and peaceful ties between Indonesia and Australia, and finally, to embarrass the current conservative government in Australia.” The House of Representatives itself “has been involved” in this deplorable attempt by “elevating the relatively insignificant question of East Timor to an attention it does not altogether deserve”; “by having hearings and suggesting the legitimacy of an independent East Timor, the remnants of the Fretilin forces are encouraged to continue killing other Timorese and Indonesians,” as resistance forces in France were encouraged to continue killing other Frenchmen and Germans by allied propaganda during World War II. *Congressional Record-House*, 20 July 1977.

[128.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 7. The visit by Meyner and Rep. William F. Goodling elicited some acid comment in the Australian press. Noel Hawken offered Rep. Meyner his “Simple-minded Soul Award for 1977” for her report of the “welcoming crowds” and general tranquillity. Noel Hawken, “Smile, Helen, you’re on credulity camera,” *Melbourne Herald* (27 April 1977). As for her colleague, Hawken reports that his views, “as he returned to Jakarta, were diamond clear. The Indonesian take-over was the best thing and should have been carried out three months earlier.” Hawken is presumably referring to Goodling’s statement quoted in the Indonesian press: “I deeply regret that Indonesia did not act three months earlier. Such a step would have prevented much of the bloodshed.” *Canberra Times* (14 April 1977). See the report of Goodling’s statements from Jakarta in the *Melbourne Age* (14 April 1977). Elizabeth Traube also dismisses the local response to the congressional delegation, noting that such “obligatory throngs of welcomers” were also customarily convened by the Portuguese authorities and regarded as “necessary nuisances” by the populations (*June-July Hearings*, pp. 22-23).

Hawken concludes that because of Australian complicity, we can never again “honestly speak up as a ‘freedom-loving nation’, dedicated to the freedom of other peoples”—a statement that is applicable with far greater force to the United States, where it has yet to be voiced in the press.

[129.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 62.

[130.](#) *March Hearings*, p. 1.

[131.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 72. The response by the State Department representative is an incoherent evasion that defies summary and would be pointless to quote.

[132.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 59.

[133.](#) Cited by Franke, *op. cit.*, p. 42, from *Foreign Assistance Act of 1968, Hearings*, House Foreign Affairs Committee, p. 706.

[134.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 61. The reference to “the fighting that was going on” is disingenuous. There was fighting, because the Indonesian army was carrying out clandestine military actions against East Timor, the civil war having ended in September. Referring to allegations of loss of life in a wave of violence “from August to December, prior to Indonesian intervention” (Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, *March Hearings*, p. 6), Dunn remarks that the official was “seemingly ignorant of the fact that there was no fighting

between the Timorese from mid-September onwards” (*Dunn Report*, p. 129).

Holbrooke also seemed unaware of Indonesian military intervention from September, 1975.

[135](#). As already noted, Australian intelligence was well aware of the impending invasion, and the press had been reporting its likelihood for some time. The *Washington Post* ran a story on 30 November 1975 stating that “Indonesia is preparing to intervene militarily to overturn yesterday’s declaration of independence by a leftist nationalist group in Portuguese East Timor, a high government official said today” (John Saar, “Jakarta Set to Use Force to Overturn Timor Independence,” citing Gen. Ali Murtopo, deputy chief of Indonesia’s intelligence agency and a senior adviser to President Suharto). The *New York Times* reported on December 5 that Foreign Minister Malik told pro-Indonesian Timorese “that the situation had gone beyond diplomacy and could be resolved only on the battlefield” (David Andelman, “President Ford’s Stop Today: Indonesia, one of Asia’s Richest Yet Poorest Countries”). Andelman reports that Malik’s statement “puzzled American officials” because of its “stridency” and timing, just before President Ford’s visit. Normal diplomacy would require cooperating in the pretense that the United States does not know about such things, the regular stance of government witnesses in the Congressional Hearings.

[136](#). *March Hearings*, pp. 5, 10.

[137](#). UPI, Lisbon, “Indonesia seizes E. Timor city,” *Boston Globe* (8 December 1975).

Note that this report, from Lisbon, states accurately that Indonesia captured Dili, not East Timor, as the *New York Times* falsely reported. The report is primarily devoted to Portugal’s breaking diplomatic relations with Indonesia.

[138](#). *Los Angeles Times* (7 December 1975). See also *Christian Science Monitor* (28 January 1976). The Ford and Kissinger reactions appear to have been effectively suppressed in the media, apart from these references.

[139](#). Laurie Oakes, *Melbourne Sun* (1 May 1976). See also the *Dunn Report*, p. 44.

[140](#). Ross Waby, *Australian* (22 January 1976) reporting from New York.

[141](#). Most of the relevant UN Documents are cited in *Decolonization*. The text of the December 1976 resolution appears in the *Dunn Report*, Appendix IV.

[142](#). The text of the cablegram appears in the *New York Times* (28 January 1976).

[143](#). *June-July Hearings*, p. 57.

- [144.](#) Paul Hofmann, “U.N. Calls on Indonesia to Leave Eastern Timor,” 23 April 1976.
- [145.](#) Frederic A. Moritz, *Christian Science Monitor* (8 December 1977).
- [146.](#) Cf. Jolliffe, pp. 267, 276.
- [147.](#) Offered as a “rough guess” by Robert Oakley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, *March Hearings*, p. 8; the context suggests that Oakley may also be including Indonesian casualties, which he states, “certainly were fairly heavy,” in this total. On the demoralizing effect of the war for the Indonesian invaders, see Jolliffe, p. 300. Oakley also claims that most of the violence ended in March 1976.
- [148.](#) On the ridiculous character of the Timorese “ratification” of integration, see Forman, *op. cit.*, pp. 12f.; Jolliffe, p. 289. Forman adds that “the Indonesians have largely ignored world opinion on the East Timor matter to date because of our government’s acquiescence” (p. 35). See also *Dunn Report*, p. 104; *Decolonization*, pp. 37-38.
- [149.](#) Allen S. Nanes, Specialist in U.S. Foreign Policy, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, entitled “The U.S. Position on Recognizing Forced Annexation of Territory,” 1 June 1977; Appendix to *June-July Hearings*. Morocco’s King Hassan was in Washington in mid-November 1978 to request an additional \$100 million worth of U.S. counterinsurgency equipment to fight the Polisario guerrillas, who at the same time were cooling their heels at the United Nations, hoping to testify on Moroccan aggression in the former Spanish Sahara (not that one would know this from the U.S. mass media). As we write, the Carter administration is deliberating, unwilling to alienate Algeria, with which the United States had trade relations amounting to over \$3.5 billion in the preceding year. Meanwhile, “Northrop Corp., the giant military contractor, is plunging ahead with plans to develop a \$200 million electronic surveillance network to help Morocco pinpoint Polisario guerrillas in the Western Sahara. Three of the U.S. experts devising this system are retired Air Force generals who developed a massive sensor network in Vietnam.” *Internews International Bulletin* (P.O. Box 4400, Berkeley, California 94704), 20 November 1978.
- [150.](#) *June-July Hearings*, p. 53.
- [151.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62. Australia’s conservative government has similar scruples—with regard to the Baltic states. David A. Andelman reports from Canberra that the Fraser government “is reported preparing to inform Moscow that Australia does not recognize the incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union.” *New York Times* (18 December 1975). The same government, however, has given *de facto*

recognition to Indonesian aggression in East Timor and has also sought to lend its assistance, e.g., by blocking FRETILIN communications to the outside world through Darwin.

[152](#). But not total silence. The *Washington Post* commented editorially on “The Indonesian annexation of East Timor,” describing it as “a depressing example of international double standards.” The editorial observed almost correctly that Indonesian intervention began in October 1975 followed by the December invasion, “backed up by the sort of military paraphernalia the US used to employ in Vietnam.” It also noted the “sickening reports of thousands of civilians dying in massacres” as “the whole episode has been treated as *fait accompli*” and pointed out that “the need to keep about 20,000 troops to fight considerably smaller guerrilla forces gives the lie to this propaganda” that the “forcible act of integration” is “an act of free choice.” “Integration without choice,” editorial, *Washington Post* (23 May 1976) on the occasion of the announcement by the head of the Indonesian client regime that full integration would take place shortly.

[153](#). *March Hearings*, pp. 19f.

[154](#). *February 1978 Hearings*, pp. 39-40.

[155](#). *Ibid.*, p. 73, our emphasis.

[156](#). “Australia’s Rift with Indonesians over Timor Troubles U.S.,” 2 May 1976.

[157](#). On the killing of the five journalists, see Jolliffe, pp. 234f. and 283f. The evidence appears persuasive that they were killed by the Indonesian forces, and then identified as “communists.” See also *Dunn Report*, p. 77f. Also Dunn’s testimony in the *March Hearings*. See also Hill, *op. cit.* Martin’s account was covered in the Australian press; see Graeme Beaton, “Timor deaths ‘hidden’,” *Australian* (29 April 1976) reporting from New York. Beaton reports that Martins, official spokesman on Timor affairs for the Indonesian government until his defection, arrived in Balibó two hours after the Australians were killed and conducted an on-the-spot investigation which, he claims, provides documentary evidence that the Australians were killed “in cold blood” and that Indonesian reports were a “cover-up.” Martins alleged that he was required to sign fabricated reports almost under threat of death. See Jolliffe, pp. 283f., for further details. Two U.S. representatives of the American Friends Service Committee, Russell and Irene Johnson, were informed by reliable sources in Jakarta that the journalists were killed by Indonesian commandos dispatched for the purpose.

- [158](#). The reference to “a very Asian answer” is typical of Western journalistic racism.
- [159](#). Dunn, *March Hearings*, pp. 26ff.
- [160](#). Their numbers, according to the refugee reports, are far less than the State Department claims. In this as in other respects the U.S. State Department keeps closely to the Indonesian propaganda line. In general, as we have seen, one major feature of this propaganda is to exaggerate the severity of the civil war and its consequences, so as to mask the U.S.-backed Indonesian atrocities.
- [161](#). Cf. Jolliffe, p. 279, for discussion of the contents of some of these letters, which were smuggled to Darwin in January 1976 and describe wholesale murder and pillage.
- [162](#). *March Hearings*, pp. 12-13.
- [163](#). Marvine Howe, “Portugal Refugees Face Bleak Winter,” *New York Times* (24 October 1976).
- [164](#). See Volume II for many examples.
- [165](#). See note 89, this chapter.
- [166](#). The 15 February 1976 *Times* story was cited by Franck in his testimony at the *June-July Hearings* (pp. 68, 57).
- [167](#). John Sharkey, “House to Probe Charge Indonesians Killed 100,000 on Timor,” *Washington Post* (13 March 1977).
- [168](#). Bernard Gwertzman, *New York Times* (13 March 1977).
- [169](#). “Charge 100,000 slain in East Timor,” AP, Canberra, *Ithaca Journal* (28 February 1977). This AP report does not appear to have been considered worthy of publication by the national media.
- [170](#). See note 202, this chapter, for further details. Gwertzman, in the report cited in note 168, stated that 56 Australian parliamentarians (the number was actually 95) had urged President Carter “to take action over the alleged human rights violations.”
- [171](#). Richard Dudman, “American Aid to Indonesia Ignores Human Rights Abuses,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (1 January 1978).
- [172](#). *June-July Hearings*, p. 31.
- [173](#). *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- [174](#). *Ibid.*, p. 69.

- [175](#). Australian Broadcasting Commission, A.M. Program, 1 April 1977. We rely on a transcript provided by a reliable source.
- [176](#). The reference to “civil war” expresses the Indonesian claim that there were no Indonesian armed forces involved, but only “volunteers” assisting anti-FRETILIN Timorese who were being oppressed and massacred. Despite occasional genuflections, these claims are dismissed out of hand by Western governments and international bodies, as by independent observers. See, for example, the record of UN resolutions reviewed above. The Western press has been quite willing to present these absurd claims as fact, however, as we have seen.
- [177](#). See chapter 4, section 1, for Sudomo’s statement shortly before the State Department version appeared in *Human Rights and U.S. Policy: Argentina, Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Peru, and the Philippines*, Reports submitted to the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, by the Department of State, 31 December 1976, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1976.
- [178](#). Russell Skelton, “Indons Killed 60,000: Report,” *Melbourne Age* (19 November 1976). The report is undoubtedly the same one from which Dunn quoted the estimates transmitted by the Indonesian church officials.
- [179](#). Michael Richardson, “Timor: One year later—Fretilin’s alive and kicking,” *Melbourne Age* (8 December 1976).
- [180](#). The document was printed in part in Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, Senate, 17 March 1977, p. 319, introduced by Senator Gietzelt. It had already appeared in full in the *Tribune* (1 December 1976) (Communist), where the anti-FRETILIN contents are noted.
- [181](#). The talk of “volunteers” and “pro-Indonesian forces” is only for foreign consumption. (See note 176, this chapter.)
- [182](#). Bram Alexander, “100,000 killed by Indons in Timor: Report,” *Sun News Pictorial*, 17 January 1977.
- [183](#). Parts were published in Australia: John Hurst, “god hasnt forsaken Timor,” *Nation Review*, 12-18 January 1978.
- [184](#). *March Hearings*, p. 8. Recall also that the State Department estimated at the very same time that only 200,000 of the 650,000 population were in areas administered by Indonesia. (See p. 183.)

- [185.](#) In his Congressional testimony of 15 February 1978 (p. 58; see note 80, this chapter), Benedict Anderson noted other apparent violations of U.S. law, specifically, the supply to Indonesia of military aid considerably in excess of what is permitted by law to countries that violate principles of the United Nations. Since “even the State Department has accepted the fact that Indonesia has not allowed the East Timorese to have self-determination, and that is clearly a United Nations principle,” it follows that the law has been violated. Anderson remarks: “It seems to me that this kind of calmly overturning or ignoring of American statutes is something very worrying and it concerns me very much. It is this evidence of what goes on in our Government that alarms me at least as much as what goes on in Indonesia,” a point worth making when one thinks of the global impact of United States policy, quite apart from its implications with regard to U.S. democracy.
- [186.](#) “‘Religious war’ in Timor, says Liberal MP,” *Canberra Times* (25 March 1978).
- [187.](#) The letter was reported in the *Internews International Bulletin* (30 January 1978). Substantial excerpts appear in the *Guardian*, New York (15 February 1978). In short, it was not inaccessible to enterprising journalists.
- [188.](#) *Canberra Times* (14 February 1978). Extracts reprinted in *East Timor News*, Bulletin of the East Timor Agency, 232 Castlereagh St., Sydney, NSW, 2000.
- [189.](#) For an important exception, see the testimony by the two anthropologists who worked with the mountain tribesmen in the *June-July Hearings*, cited above. Like all other informed observers, they credit the accounts of Indonesian atrocities and dismiss the Indonesian claims to local support.
- [190.](#) This one point is incorrect, Jolliffe notes, according to intelligence sources that place the Indonesian troop level at 14,000, “although this may be a too conservative estimate.” The *Financial Review* (Australia), 8 October 1976, estimated that “pacification of East Timor is being carried out by an Indonesian army of nearly 40,000 men, according to informed estimates.”
- [191.](#) See pp. 217-19, this chapter.
- [192.](#) *Dunn Report*, p. 97.
- [193.](#) Cf. Volume II, chapter 6, for an account of his honors for these journalistic achievements, a Pulitzer Prize, bestowed over the heads of the jury just at the time of this penetrating report. (See note 198, this chapter.)

- [194](#). Cf. Jolliffe, p. 287, citing José Martins, who was directly involved as an Indonesian collaborator.
- [195](#). Press reporting from Vietnam as well as such material as the *Pentagon Papers* continually referred to Vietnamese “xenophobia,” which always posed serious difficulties for the U.S. liberators. The sheer stupidity of imperial propagandists over the years really is quite difficult to believe. (See section 3 for some examples from the Kennedy Administration.)
- [196](#). Reuters, Jakarta, “Collapse Forecast for the Revolt of East Timor,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (18 October 1978).
- [197](#). Letter to Arnold Kohen, dated 3 July 1978.
- [198](#). Henry Kamm, “Guerrillas in Timor Still Fight Indonesia,” *New York Times*, (19 April 1978). The *Times* refused to publish a letter by Arnold Kohen (see note 80, this chapter) objecting to some of the more obvious falsehoods in Kamm’s report, and noting Kamm’s curious failure even to mention allegations of genocide—particularly striking, given that the bulk of his reporting is concerned with precisely this issue—from “enemy territory,” however. Kamm’s report was the subject of appropriate derision by Alexander Cockburn, *Village Voice* (8 May 1978).
- [199](#). Cf. Jolliffe, pp. 291-92.
- [200](#). Cited in *Timor Information Service*, October 1978 (Australia) from the *Review of International Affairs*, 5-20 August 1978.
- [201](#). See, for example, Keith Martin, “Shipping ban on Indonesia to stay,” *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 February 1977) reporting that “the ban by Australian maritime unions on Indonesian shipping seems likely to remain in force.” The ban was imposed in November 1975 just prior to the Indonesian invasion, which was known to be imminent despite feigned State Department “ignorance.” Most unions “favoured retaining the ban as a continuing expression of protest against the Timor invasion,” rejecting the interest of Australia in wheat sales to Indonesia. See Hill, pp. 14-15, on union opposition to the Indonesian invasion and business support for it. Also Jolliffe, pp. 294-95. There has apparently been considerable internal union conflict on this issue.
- [202](#). The letter is reprinted in full in Hansard, *op. cit.*, p. 321; cf. note 180, this chapter. According to Senator Gietzelt, who introduced it into the record, it was signed by 95 members of Parliament, the majority from Government parties, constituting a majority

of the Australian Parliament. It applauded Carter's concern for human rights in the USSR and Uganda and urged him to approach Indonesia on the matter of East Timor, apparently without irony.

[203](#). We return to this matter in Volume II. In contrast, the U.S. press has recognized "responsible" opposition to the U.S. war on grounds of excessive cost and failure, the kind of opposition expressed in regard to Nazi aggression by thoughtful Germans after Stalingrad.

[204](#). Newcastle *Morning Herald* (6 April 1977).

[205](#). Michael Hodgman, "Timor appeasement must end," *Australian* (21 February 1977).

[206](#). Reuters, "30,000 deaths," *Manchester Guardian* (14 September 1978), a 33-word item that did not reach the United States, to our knowledge.

[207](#). The letter appears as Appendix 2 in the *March Hearings*.

[208](#). The letter, dated 29 April 1976, is reproduced in full in *Timor Information Service*, 6 May 1976, Australia. As noted above, Martins was the official spokesman on Timor affairs for the Indonesian government.

[209](#). Cf. Jolliffe, pp. 282f. for further details.

[210](#). *March Hearings*, 52ff.

[211](#). Interview translated in FBIS, Indonesia, IV, 28 September 1978, N1-N2, from *l'Humanité*, Paris, 18 September 1978. The context indicates that by the word translated as "casualties," Alkatiri meant "deaths."

[212](#). George McArthur, "Indonesia Anxious to Replace Decrepit Arms," reporting from Jakarta, *IHT*, 5 December 1977, reprinted from the *Los Angeles Times*. McArthur states that "the Indonesians generally have avoided using U.S. equipment to spare Washington's sensibilities, but a lot of U.S. equipment nevertheless is being used." This statement, perhaps, reflects the same logic that enabled him to say that the Indonesian Communist Party subjected the country to a huge massacre in the mid-1960s, and that the "attempted Communist coup...failed in a national bloodbath...." (See chapter 4, section 4.1., p. 245-46.)

[213](#). This is a constant pretense in the media. In fact, arms sales have boomed under Carter, as the press also reports. See, e.g., George C. Wilson, "Arms Sales Record Set in Fiscal 1978," *Washington Post* (3 October 1978), reporting that "the United States sold a record amount of military weapons and services to foreign nations in the fiscal

year just ended, according to Pentagon figures released yesterday.” On sales to Indonesia, see note 235, this chapter.

[214.](#) Terence Smith, “Mondale is a Nonexpert Who Matters,” *New York Times*, Week in Review (14 May 1978). No mention of East Timor appears in this account, though that is where these planes are likely to be used. (But see note 223.) Representatives Donald Fraser and Helen Meyner wrote a letter on 22 June 1978 to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance expressing their reservations over the projected sale of A-4 aircraft to Indonesia, noting that these would be “particularly useful in East Timor” for air to ground attack. They questioned the State Department’s claim that these aircraft would be used primarily for training purposes. The response by Douglas Bennet of the State Department (15 August 1978) assured them that “the Indonesian Government has no intention of using the A-4 aircraft in East Timor” (he also noted, interestingly, that the U.S. government is not “sanguine over the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the fighting between Fretilin and the Indonesian Government,” as of August 1978; recall previous claims that the fighting is essentially over). This is a standard pretense by the governments that are taking part in the slaughter in East Timor. Thus, the State Department representative, Robert Oakley, testified in the *February 1978 Hearings*, when asked by Rep. Fraser about the sale of F-5E and F-5F jet warplanes to Indonesia: “So far as I know, sir, there is no intention on the part of Indonesia to use them....But this is something on which we cannot be categoric....I do not believe that the supply of one squadron of F-5E’s to replace a squadron of F-86E’s is going to have any impact on the situation in East Timor, sir,” though he agreed with Fraser’s comment that “F-86E’s are nearing the end of their life” (p. 67). Later he added that “the arms which we are supplying now,” including attack aircraft, “are not as best I know, destined for East Timor, although, as I said, we can’t give a guarantee to this effect” (p. 73). But we’ll give them the planes anyway, trusting our Indonesian friends.

[215.](#) *East Timor Information Bulletin*, 40 Concannon Road, London SW2, May 1978.

[216.](#) R.-P. Paringaux, “La France envisage de livrer divers armements a l’Indonesie,” *Le Monde* (14 September 1978).

[217.](#) We return to this matter in Volume II, chapter 4.

[218.](#) In Volume II, chapter 6, we will consider in some detail the evidence that has been produced by those who speak in these terms.

[219.](#) See Roger, *op. cit.*, p. 77, for quotes and references, specifically, to *La Croix*, 23 June

1976, an article by Christian Rudel.

[220](#). Tom Uren, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Parliamentary Debates (Australia), 17 November 1976, Representatives, 282s.

[221](#). Laurie Oakes, *Melbourne Sun* (17 November 1976).

[222](#). Technically, the answer is “yes.” In the early days of the Indonesian invasion—when, as already noted, proper news control had not yet been fully established (see note 117, this chapter)—the *New York Times* did publish tiny items based on radio communications of the forces resisting what the *Times* itself recognized as blatant aggression. See “500 Reported Killed,” (9 December 1975); “Indonesian Attack in Timor Reported,” (27 December 1975); “Broadcast from Timor Says Pro-Indonesian Forces Advance,” (28 December 1975); “Burning of Food Alleged in Timor,” (4 January 1976). The first of these is from Lisbon, the last three from Darwin, Australia. These exceptions, which a serious theory of the Free Press would treat as statistical error, show that it is not beyond the technical capacity of the Free Press to report the news of the world, were it to choose to do so; a fact which is obvious in any event.

On the December 28 dispatch, see note 117, this chapter. Note that the headline cited, with its reference to “Pro-Indonesian Forces,” almost certainly involves a *Times* editorial fabrication, which appears as well in the report itself.

[223](#). On 1 December 1977, Amnesty International released a criticism of Indonesia for refusing to allow the Red Cross to visit East Timor. It received no press coverage. The *Australian* (11 May 1978) reports that Indonesia “has agreed to allow relief teams, including the International Red Cross, into East Timor for the first time since it was taken over in July, 1976.” The information comes from sources close to Vice-President Mondale, and allegedly Indonesia’s “decision” is a consequence of Mondale’s discussions in Jakarta in which he was so impressed with Indonesia’s leap forward in the Human Rights field that he exerted unusual efforts to obtain planes for them to use in their annihilation of simple mountain people in Timor. The reference is interesting; it shows that behind the mask of silence, the U.S. government is not as ignorant as it pretends. As we write, the International Red Cross has not been admitted, nor have journalists been permitted anything but a highly restricted glimpse. We assume that the A-4 ground attack bombers have been or will be delivered, however. It should all be good for a few laughs over coffee and Danish at the Friday breakfast. (See p. 217, this chapter.)

[224](#). For example the Reuters report of 18 October 1978 in the *San Francisco Chronicle* cited above (see note 196, this chapter) states that “one sign of FRETILIN’s deteriorating strength can be seen in the fact that a radio station run by the guerrillas—a small portable transmitter—has not been heard for several months.” The report is false. Despite the efforts of Indonesia and Australia to stop communications, radio transmissions from FRETILIN were being received through November 1978. One may perhaps also question the conclusion supported by the false premise.

In a statement prepared for delivery before the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, November 1978, Jill Jolliffe cites a radio broadcast of November 28.

[225](#). “CIA Said to Aid Indonesia Units in East Timor,” *International Herald Tribune* (20 June 1978).

[226](#). Richard Carleton, “Brainwash follows the bloodbath,” *London Observer* (31 July 1977); “Timor—and a story of massacre,” “The place of death in Timor,” *Melbourne Age* (10-11 August 1977); the version the *Age* has is considerably more detailed.

[227](#). David Jenkins, “Timor’s arithmetic of despair,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 September 1978.

[228](#). *Sydney Morning Herald* (11 September 1978).

[229](#). Jill Jolliffe’s paraphrase in her prepared testimony for the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. (See note 224, this chapter.)

[230](#). *Ibid.* Recall that Dili was the one place where there may have been some initial willingness to accept Indonesian “integration,” prior to the invasion. Recall also the description of the situation in Dili by the Indonesian Church officials, who report that two-thirds of its original 30,000 people want to leave for Portugal while others are with FRETILIN in the mountains.

[231](#). See p. 177 and note 177, this chapter, for the first of these.

[232](#). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, p. 235. (See note 69, this chapter.)

[233](#). *Human Rights Conditions in Selected Countries and the U.S. Response*, prepared for the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, by the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 25 July 1978, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978, pp. 103-104.

[234](#). Seth Lipsky and Raphael Pura, “Indonesia: Testing time for the ‘New Order’,”

Foreign Affairs, Fall, 1978.

- [235](#). The diligent reader of the press might have been able to recall the story by Ann Crittenden, *New York Times* (17 July 1977) reporting “a recently completed and detailed analysis of American foreign aid to eight developing countries” which notes that “the Carter Administration has requested a sizable increase in military assistance to Indonesia in the 1978 fiscal year, in spite of that country’s invasion in 1975 of the neighboring island of East Timor, which it still occupies” in defiance of UN resolutions and “charges that 30,000 to 100,000 political prisoners have been held [in Indonesia] for years without trial,” after the bloodbath of the 1960s.
- [236](#). The official Indonesian figure for total detainees since the Communists were crushed in 1965 is 750,000. (See p. 237, this chapter.) Note also the lack of comment on the 12-year delay in releasing these “thousands.” This is rectified elsewhere. Thus on 30 October 1977, the *Times* remarks (“Topics”) that “hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were arrested after an aborted left-wing coup in 1965” (the U.S. government and media version; cf. chapter 4, section 1 on the facts) and that “tens of thousands remain in indefinite detention without even a trial,” most of them classified in “‘Category B,’ meaning that while they are believed to have been *indirectly* involved in the 1965 coup attempt, there is not sufficient evidence for court.” This seems excessive to the *Times* editorialists, who comment: “Twelve years in prison are surely enough for that offense.” That is, twelve years in prison seems to suffice for the “offense” of being “believed to have been indirectly involved” in a coup attempt that appears to have been a propaganda fabrication in the first place.

[237](#). Mark Baker, “Iran war kills 9000,” *Melbourne Age* (24 April 1978).

[238](#). Richard W. Franke, review of *The Rule of the Sword: The Story of West Irian*, by Nonie Sharp, Kibble Books, 1977; BCAS, vol. 10, no. 1, 1978.

4 Constructive Terror

- [1](#). The Orwellian twists and turns of Western usage of these words in the interests of a workable double standard is discussed above, chapter 3, section 1.
- [2](#). Peter Dale Scott, “Exporting Military-Economic Development: America and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-67,” in Malcolm Caldwell, ed., *Ten Years’ Military Terror in Indonesia*, Spokesman Books, 1975, p. 209.
- [3](#). As C.L. Sulzberger noted, “From an American viewpoint, this represents a positive achievement”; “As the Shadow Lengthens,” *New York Times* (3 December 1965). He

refers only to the generals' coup. The associated bloodbath, already well under way, he does not even find worthy of mention.

4. James Reston's article featuring Indonesia, in which there is no mention of mass murder, was titled "A Gleam of Light," *New York Times* (19 June 1966). The changes are referred to as "significant" and "hopeful," with Indonesia no longer controlled by people "fiercely hostile to the United States." See also the "moderate scholars" statement discussed on p. 98.
5. The model may well have been quite explicit. In a study of CIA psychological warfare leading to the coup in which Allende was deposed and murdered, Fred Landis points out that the CIA concocted a document purporting to reveal a leftist plot to murder Chilean military officers—the pretext used by the Indonesian generals to launch their mass murder—while the CIA-backed press ran headlines to the same effect. Meanwhile, "hundreds of leftist leaders received a card 'Djakarta is approaching'" as did military officers, while a CIA agent directed right-wing groups "to paint this same slogan in red all over Santiago." Fred Landis, "Psychological Warfare in Chile: The CIA Makes Headlines," *Liberation*, March-April 1975. See also Scott, *op. cit.*
6. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 247; Malcolm Caldwell in Selden, ed., *Remaking Asia*, Pantheon, 1973, p. 48. The leaders seem to have been an anti-corruption and populist group, reacting against the frozen hierarchical structure of the military establishment and the massive looting by the top echelons. See Ben Anderson, "Last Days of Indonesia's Suharto?" in *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, No. 62, July-August, 1978, pp. 2-3. For a broad account suggesting some PKI involvement, but giving little credence to PKI initiative or domination, see Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, 1978, chapter 4.
7. Crouch, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 48-49.
8. Scott, *op. cit.*, cites RAND memoranda by Indonesia specialist Guy Pauker who feared in 1964 that the Indonesian anti-Communist forces "would probably lack the ruthlessness that made it possible for the Nazis to suppress the Communist Party of Germany" in 1933, since they "are weaker than the Nazis, not only in numbers and in mass support, but also in unity, discipline, and leadership." But, as he explained four years later, "The assassination of the six army generals by the September 30 Movement elicited the ruthlessness that I had not anticipated a year earlier and resulted in the death of large numbers of Communist cadres."

9. Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, Doubleday, New York, 1967, p. 377. Before the 1965 coup over 4,000 Indonesian officers had been trained in the U.S. and a substantial proportion of Indonesian weapons were made in the U.S. See also Ruth McVey, "The Post Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army, II," *Indonesia*, April 1972, p. 169. Before October 1965 the USSR was a major supplier of heavy equipment to the Indonesian navy and air force. It was displaced after the coup, and the U.S. became virtually sole supplier of the Indonesian armed forces.
10. "Lest We Forget," in Caldwell, *Ten Years' Military Terror*, p. 14.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.
12. Amnesty International, *Indonesia*, AI, 1977, p. 21.
13. "Lest We Forget," *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.
14. "Indonesian Communism Since the 1965 Coup," *Pacific Affairs*, Spring 1970, pp. 35-36.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
17. AI, *Indonesia*, p. 22.
18. "Jakarta Says Most Political Prisoners Will Be Free in '79," *New York Times* (12 April 1978).
19. Ernest Utrecht, "The Indonesian Army as an Instrument of Repression," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, March 1972.
20. AI, *Indonesia*, p. 13.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 44.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
25. Jacques Decornoy, "Des dizaines de milliers de personnes sont internees sans grand espoir d'être jugées un jour," *Le Monde* (11 November 1972).
26. Richard Robison, "Toward a Class Analysis of the Indonesian Military State," *Indonesia*, April 1978, p. 24, n. 23.

- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- [28.](#) Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- [29.](#) “Indonesia: Why foreign investors are scared,” *Business Week*, 18 April 1977.
- [30.](#) David Andelman, “Indonesia Opens Inquiry on Charge of Huge Payoffs in Satellite Project,” *New York Times* (4 February 1977).
- [31.](#) Burt Schorr, “Indonesia Restaurant Shows How Firms Can Succumb to Threat to Foreign Stakes,” *Wall Street Journal* (13 October 1977). Schorr quotes one restaurant critic saying: “Obviously somebody spent a lot of time (and money) putting it all together.” Schorr says: “Somebody did spend a lot of money on the Ramayana: more than 50 companies and individuals that either were doing business in Indonesia or hoped to. Altogether, they bought more than \$1 million of stock in Ramayana’s parent company after some not-so-subtle arm-twisting by officials of...Pertamina, which organized the adventure in dining.”
- [32.](#) *Ibid.*
- [33.](#) Robison, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
- [34.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- [35.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 32.
- [36.](#) Crouch, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-88.
- [37.](#) Ingrid Palmer, “The Economy, 1965-1975,” in Caldwell, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
- [38.](#) Crouch, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
- [39.](#) Barry Newman, “ ‘Sticky Handshakes’ Are Coming Unglued A Bit in Indonesia,” *Wall Street Journal* (8 December 1977).
- [40.](#) *Ibid.*
- [41.](#) Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
- [42.](#) “Some indication of this scale is suggested by the recent criminal conviction of a middle-level provincial official of the National Supply Board for the embezzlement of \$19 million.” *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- [43.](#) *Ibid.*
- [44.](#) Andelman, *op. cit.* (note 30).

- [45.](#) David A. Andelman, “Indonesia Is One of the Richest and Poorest Countries in Asia,” *New York Times* (5 December 1975).
- [46.](#) Robison, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
- [47.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- [48.](#) Barry Newman, “Slowed Development and Huge Debts are Pertamina’s Legacy to Indonesia,” *Wall Street Journal* (11 February 1977). Only a few years previously, *Fortune* had written an accolade to General Sutowo and Pertamina for his understanding of the need to be very nice to foreign oil companies. While pointing out that some critics “have accused him of milking the company,” *Fortune* swallowed at face value Sutowo’s denials. See Louis Kraar, “Oil and Nationalism Mix Beautifully in Indonesia,” *Fortune*, July 1973, pp. 99ff.
- [49.](#) Newman, *op. cit.*
- [50.](#) See chapter 3, section 4.4, for a discussion of the material results of Mondale’s pleasure over the improvement in the human rights situation: namely, Mondale’s personal intervention to obtain A/4 attack bombers that can be put to use to murder the population of East Timor, while the accompanying Indonesian promise to allow entry to the International Red Cross was conveniently forgotten by all concerned as soon as the state visit was completed. See p. 217-18 and chapter 3, note 223.
- [51.](#) The Pentagon is reasonably pleased with the satellite status of Indonesia, but it is far from happy with the abysmal performance of the Indonesian military in its now three-year-old unsuccessful war of aggression in East Timor. (See chapter 3, section 4.4.)
- [52.](#) According to a study by Joel Rocamora, “Political Prisoners and the Army Regime in Indonesia,” Cornell University, June 1970, p. 1.
- [53.](#) “It is authoritatively estimated that 10% to 15% of the total cost of bank-financed projects in Indonesia is dissipated through ‘leakage’.” Barry Newman, “Missing the Mark: In Indonesia Attempts By World Bank to Aid Poor Often Go Astray,” *Wall Street Journal* (10 November 1977).
- [54.](#) Don Moser, “Where the rivers ran crimson,” *Life*, 1 July 1966; cited by Landis, *op. cit.*
- [55.](#) George McArthur, “Teng’s successes in SE Asia,” *Los Angeles Times-Boston Globe* (15 November 1978).
- [56.](#) George McArthur, “Indonesia Anxious to Replace Decrepit Arms,” *International Herald Tribune* (5 December 1977), reprinted from the *Los Angeles Times*. On the

contents of this quite significant report from Jakarta, see chapter 3, section 4.4., p. 216-17.

57. These moderate scholars not only use a double standard—with violence in the interest of opposition to social change justified by a set of nationalistic rationalizations—they also show themselves to be incompetent scholars, or propagandists, or both. As already noted, the U.S.-Diem forces always gave violence a higher priority on the spectrum of means for effecting or opposing change than did the NLF, and up until 1960 the NLF used minimal violence. They were *not* “committed to the thesis that violence was the best means of effecting change,” but Diem and his advisors never were able to make a serious and sustained effort at any course other than counterrevolutionary violence. (See chapter 5, sections 1.1, 2.1)

58. *New York Times* (6 July 1966).

59. *U.S. News and World Report*, 27 November 1972.

60. See the reviews by Coral Bell and B. Anderson in the *China Quarterly*, No. 28, October-December 1966, pp. 140-43.

61. Frank C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, Public Affairs Press, 1965, p. 65. For some years Darling was a CIA analyst specializing in Thailand.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

63. Testimony of Leonard Unger, in Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, *Kingdom of Thailand* (1969), p. 613. Hereafter, *Thailand*.

64. Darling, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

67. “And we are trying to preserve, trying to help them preserve, their independence.” Ambassador Unger, *Thailand*, p. 859.

68. *Thailand*, p. 639.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 648.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 611.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 613.

[72.](#) *Ibid.*

[73.](#) Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Pantheon, 1968, vol. I, p. 486.

[74.](#) Darling, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[75.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[76.](#) *Thailand*, p. 748.

[77.](#) David A. Andelman, "Thai Business Chiefs Still Uneasy in Wake of Military Coup," *New York Times* (17 October 1976).

[78.](#) *Ibid.*

[79.](#) Darling, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[80.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[81.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[82.](#) This is reminiscent of the Thieu technique of allegedly "releasing prisoners," not to the PRG as required in the January 1973 agreement, but into the population at large. (See chapter 5, section 1.6.) This device was thought by some to have been a mechanism for covering up the murder of political prisoners.

[83.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[84.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[85.](#) See especially, Thomas Lobe, *United States National Security Policy and Aid To The Thailand Police*, University of Denver Monograph Series in World Affairs, vol. 14, no. 2, 1977, pp. 19-25.

[86.](#) E. Thadeus Flood, *The United States and the Military Coup in Thailand: A Background Study*, Indochina Resource Center, 1976, pp. 1-2.

[87.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[88.](#) *Ibid.*

[89.](#) Lobe, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

[90.](#) "The U.S. Role in Thai Society," in "Military Coup in Thailand," *Indochina Chronicle*, January-February 1977, pp. 6-7.

[91.](#) *Thailand Fact Sheet* (1932-1976), Southeast Asian Specialists at Cornell University, 18 October 1976, pp. 7-8.

- [92.](#) See especially, Ben Anderson, “Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 6 Coup,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, October 1977, pp. 16-19.
- [93.](#) Flood, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7; *Thailand Fact Sheet*, pp. 8-10.
- [94.](#) On U.S. involvement, see also Don Luce, “Thailand: How the U.S. Engineered A Coup,” *Win*, 21 October 1976; Harvey Wasserman, “Thailand on the Tide of Reaction,” *The Nation*, 30 October 1976; David and Susan Morell, “Thailand and the U.S.,” *New York Times* (Op.-Ed.) (22 November 1976).
- [95.](#) *Thailand Fact Sheet*, p. 8.
- [96.](#) Both media fabrications and agents provocateurs played a significant role in counterrevolutionary activity in Thailand. The major pre-coup fabrication is described by Anderson as follows:
- Some days earlier [prior to the coup on 6 October 1976], on September 24, two workers at Nakhon Pathom, putting up posters protesting former dictator Thanom’s re-entry into Siam under the cloak of monkhood, were beaten to death by some local policemen and their corpses hanged. Two days before the coup, a radical student troupe staged a dramatic re-enactment of the murder in the Bo Tree courtyard of Thammasat University as part of a nationwide campaign for Thanom’s expulsion. The rabid right wing newspaper *Dao Sayam* touched up photographs of the performance in such a way as to suggest that one of the actors “strangled” had been made up to look like the crown prince. In a coordinated maneuver, the Armored Division Radio broadcast the slander, urged the citizenry to buy copies of *Dao Sayam*, and demanded retribution for this “cruel attack” on the royal family. From this stemmed the lynch-mobs that paved the way for the military takeover. (“Withdrawal Symptoms...,” *op. cit.*)
- [97.](#) Luce, *op. cit.*; “U.S. Role in Thai Society,” p. 9, n.1.
- [98.](#) See Luce, Susan and David Morell, and Flood, *op. cit.*
- [99.](#) Flood, p. 4.
- [100.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- [101.](#) Ambassador Gauss wrote to Cordell Hull during World War II that Chiang Kai-Shek had reminded him that “In the matter of world problems, China is disposed to follow our lead....” Department of State, *Relations With China*, p. 561. Chiang’s state, though deeply corrupt and unstable, therefore held out a great potential for becoming “the principal stabilizing factor in the Far East,” *Yalta Papers*, p. 353. Cited by Gabriel

Kolka, *Politics of War*, Random House, 1968, p. 221.

- [102](#). National Security Council; 5429/2 (20 August 1954). U.S. Department of Defense, United States—Vietnam Relations, 1945-67, Book 10, pp. 731ff., Government Printing Office, 1971. (This is the government edition of the Pentagon Papers.)
- [103](#). An exception in its detail on Thai corruption is the Andelman article cited in note 77, this chapter, but even this article completely avoids any analysis of U.S. involvement and responsibility, or the economic consequences of military shakedowns and intervention (either efficiency or income distribution effects). The article conveys a resigned flavor of objective recognition of inevitable forces, avoiding any trace of the moral indignation that is standard in news stories dealing with official enemies.
- [104](#). An early illustration is a 1966 report by Peter Braestrup, “U.S. Helps Thailand at Village Level in Effort to Thwart Reds,” *New York Times* (27 December 1966), which conveys the straight U.S. propaganda line that while Bangkok had been engaged only in suppression in the villages up to now, with U.S. aid there was a new thrust toward winning hearts and minds. Corruption appears only in quotes, as a Communist allegation. The nature and quality of the political and social order and the U.S. role are completely ignored.
- [105](#). “The U.S. has maintained an official silence on developments here during the past five months, and, for better or worse, this silence is widely viewed, among both friends and foes of Marcos, as signifying U.S. support for the president and his policies.” Peter Kann, “Marcos’s Manila: ‘Smiling Martial Law’ Leaves Most Filipinos Carrying On as Usual,” *Wall Street Journal* (12 March 1973).
- [106](#). General “Jake” Smith. Cited in Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Oscar M. Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, Malaya Books, 1967, p. 272.
- [107](#). Cited by Jonathan Fast, “Crisis in the Philippines,” *New Left Review* (March-April, 1973), p. 75, from Moorfield Storey and Julian Cadman, *Secretary Root’s Records: Marked Severities in Philippine Warfare*, Chicago, 1902, pp. 116, 71-73. For similar observations from U.S. War Department records, see Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Pantheon, 1969, chapter 3, pp. 252-53.
- [108](#). Sixto Lopez, “The Philippine Problem: a proposition for a solution,” *The Outlook*, 13 April 1901.
- [109](#). Bernard Wideman, “The Philippines: Five Years of Martial Law,” *Ampo: Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, July-November 1977, p. 69.

- [110.](#) Justus M. van der Kroef, "Communism and Reform in the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs*, Spring, 1973, p. 31.
- [111.](#) For an account of the postwar peasant rebellion, which has been clouded for years in one of the more successful propaganda campaigns, see Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, University of California Press, 1977.
- [112.](#) Fast, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.
- [113.](#) "Real wage rates of Philippine skilled workers dropped [1955 is 100] from 89.2 in 1969 to 74.9 at the end of the first half of 1971; the rates for unskilled workers fell in the same period from 100.0 to 90.4." Vander Kroef, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- [114.](#) The last item is Vander Kroef's summary of one of the findings of the 1970 Agbayani House Sub-Committee Report, *ibid.*, p. 39.
- [115.](#) Ownership of the main elements of the press, radio and TV quickly passed into the hands of Marcos, his family and associates, after the declaration of martial law. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- [116.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- [117.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.
- [118.](#) See chapter 2, pp. 70-71.
- [119.](#) Wideman, *op. cit.*, p. 64. The methods of classification of land eligible for reform has tended to accelerate conversion to intensive uses qualifying for exemption, with further displacement effects.
- [120.](#) There have been strikes even under martial law, but thousands of workers have been detained by the military in strike-breaking efforts, and there can be no question but that the number and effectiveness of strikes has been greatly reduced.
- [121.](#) Wideman, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
- [122.](#) *Ibid.*
- [123.](#) Tom Jones, "Philippines Report," *Matchbox (Amnesty International)*, Winter, 1977, p. 13.
- [124.](#) This is quite reasonable since Marcos bears direct responsibility for the system of torture. And Marcos's masters in the background, such as McNamara (as head of the World Bank), Nixon, Ford, Carter, and their top advisers complete the circle of

responsibility in the same fashion as Johnson-Rusk-Nixon-Kissinger did for the multitude of Mylais in Vietnam.

[125](#). Such visits as Mondale's are, of course, a big political plus for the rulers of the provinces, acknowledging the importance of the province and the supportive link to the tyrant. The *New York Times* noted that "there was, to be sure, the requisite 'candid and constructive' chat with Mr. Marcos, who was reportedly told that if the Philippines did not shape up on human rights, strained relations could result. But before flying off, Mr. Mondale left his host a going away present, signing four rural aid agreements worth \$41 million." "Tread Not on Us, Filipino Answer On Human Rights," *New York Times* (7 May 1978). It would be interesting to know what was said that was "constructive." Even more interesting would be Mondale's conception of human rights conditions in the Philippines, if any, that could alter our continuing solid support of that police state. (See note 50 on Mondale's contributions to human rights as he passed through Jakarta.)

[126](#). The demonstration election technique was in regular use during the U.S. occupation of South Vietnam, where, as in the Philippines, it was geared strictly to the needs of the external power. In a 1968 volume by one of the authors, the concept was defined as follows: "A circus performed in a client state to reassure the populace of the intervening country that their intrusion is well received." (Edward S. Herman, *The Great Society Dictionary*, Philadelphia, 1968, p. 11) George Kahin recently described the last elections in the Philippines as "strongly influenced by senior American foreign policy officials who apparently hoped that such an exercise would help improve the deteriorating image Marcos had developed abroad as a consequence of 5¹/₂ years of martial law...It must be understood that this election was conducted primarily for a foreign audience, the American Congress in particular." Kahin went on to point out the incongruity for an allegedly human rights-oriented administration "that so far it has indicated no audible concern over the fact that within less than 2 hours of the close of the polls on April 7, Marcos ordered troops and police to round up a number of the key 21 opposition candidates, people who had had the courage to run against him and his wife in metropolitan Manila." *Human Rights in the Philippines: Recent Developments*, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the House Committee on International Relations, 95th Congress, 2nd Session, 27 April 1978, p. 5.

[127](#). This new technique is discussed in many of the expatriate journals such as *Ang Katipunan* ("Victims of Liquidation? Many Political Prisoners Missing," 27 July-10 August 1977, p. 12) and the *Philippine Liberation Courier* ("Political Prisoners

Missing,” 10 February 1978, p. 6). As described by George Kahin:

...beginning a little over a year ago, a new and rapidly increasing tactic has been introduced, referred to by the Philippine army as “salvaging,” a process wherein the torture continues but most of the physical evidence is removed.

This calls for the removal of the person who has been tortured, in most cases—one of the most knowledgeable sources estimated about 90 percent of the time—removed through out-right killing. Now, the killings, of course, help insure the disappearance of the often quite indelible marks of torture.

A frequent pattern of these so-called salvage operations is for the Government to announce that in a fire-fight, alleged or real, with forces of the pro-Communist insurgents the bodies of one or more who disappeared after torture had been found and then, of course, conveniently buried.

Thereby the Government secures two objectives: It “proves” that the missing person had, as the Government alleges, Communist or subversive connections because of the context in which the body was found, and it hides the physical evidence of the previous torture.

(Testimony before the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Organizations of the House Committee on International Relations, 27 April 1978, p. 6.)

[128.](#) *Ibid.*

[129.](#) “Philippines: A government that needs U.S. business,” *Business Week*, 4 November 1972.

[130.](#) Donald McCouch (Vice President of MHT), “As Lenders See It, Philippines Excels in Managing Debt,” *American Banker*, 21 September 1976, p. 10A.

[131.](#) For a good discussion of the dispensability of the Philippine bases, see George Kahin’s article in the *Washington Post* (27 August 1978), reprinted in the *Congressional Record* (“Philippine Bases Reconsidered”), 8 September 1978, pp. S14841-4.

[132.](#) See Table 1, chapter 2.

[133.](#) *Far Eastern Economic Review* (5 August 1972), p. 13; cited by Vander Kroef, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[134.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

[135.](#) Geoffrey Arlin, “The Organisers,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 July 1973.

[136.](#) Walton was subsequently reassigned to Iran, “his capacity there being what it was in Saigon and Manila: the creation and strengthening of the civil police in order to ‘protect’ the people from any anti-Government movements.” *Ibid.*

[137.](#) *Ibid.*

[138.](#) *Ibid.*

[139.](#) *Ibid.*

[140.](#) Tad Szulc, “The Moveable War,” *New Republic*, 12 May 1973.

[141.](#) “Another Senate Test,” *New York Times* (9 July 1973).

[142.](#) See Volume II, chapters 4 and 5.

[143.](#) For some details, see Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, Pantheon, 1970, chapter 4 and *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973, chapter 2 and references cited there. For a Laotian view, see Fred Branfman, ed., *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, Harper, 1972.

[144.](#) The program of the NDF and a discussion of its constituency and growth is given in “Preparing For Revolution, The United Front in the Philippines,” *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, No. 62, May-June 1978.

[145.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

[146.](#) Thus, on the eve of the demonstration election of April 7, 1978, hundreds of thousands of people in Manila turned out—“workers and upper class matrons, students and soldiers, young and old, housewives and taxi drivers, bar hostesses and stockbrokers—poured into the streets shouting, banging pots and pans, honking car horns, exploding firecrackers, singing, marching through the streets in demonstration of support for the opposition *Laban* (Fight) Party. For three hours, the people shouted their anger, frustration and hatred for the Marcos regime. *Laban* organizers had called for a 15-minute demonstration.” *Ibid.*, p. 2.

This is reminiscent of Greece on November 3, 1968. The last legally elected Greek Prime Minister, George Papandreou, died on November 1, 1968, and the junta of Colonels, by then in power for 18 months, could hardly prevent a public funeral for this notable. One month previously the junta had “won” a completely fraudulent and meaningless referendum. The funeral of November 3 brought out a crowd of 500,000 mourners into the streets of Athens, who in the safety of overwhelming numbers made very clear their contempt and hatred for the U.S.-sponsored client fascist regime of Greece. It was a moment of truth for the junta and for those outside Greece who wanted to see.

[147.](#) See Joseph Lelyveld, “Church in Philippines Becoming A Focus of Opposition to Marcos,” *New York Times* (18 October 1973); “Manila Presses Its Drive on Liberal Catholics With Arrests and Closing of Radio Stations,” *New York Times* (28 November 1976); Richard Deats, “Christian Resistance Intensifies in the Philippines,” *Social*

Questions Bulletin, The Methodist Federation For Social Action, March-April 1975.

[148](#). See section 4.5. of this chapter.

[149](#). Johnson put out a search for Communists in the Dominican Republic *after* the decision to invade had already been made, in order to provide the touch of acceptability that an honest admission of an intent to prevent a modestly independent democracy would not have given him. In their hasty mustering up of a list of “Communists,” the Embassy in Santo Domingo included a number of small children and deceased individuals. See Theodore Draper, *The Dominican Revolt: A Case Study in American Policy*, Commentary, 1968; Jerome Slater, *The United States and the Dominican Revolution*, Harper, 1971.

[150](#). Alan Riding, “Balaguer and His Firm Ally, the U.S., Are Targets of Dominican Unrest,” *New York Times* (6 June 1975).

[151](#). AI, *Report on Torture*, pp. 211-212.

[152](#). Norman Gall, “Santo Domingo: The Politics of Terror,” *New York Review of Books*, 22 July 1971.

[153](#). AI, *Annual Report* for 1977, p. 138.

[154](#). Coalition for Human Rights, *Congressional Record*, 5 April 1978, H 2511.

[155](#). The PRD ran on a vague platform that promised improved health programs, a larger educational budget, and mild land reform. But under the pressures of the military and economic elites Guzman gradually backed away from the mildly threatening aspects of his program and also promised to send abroad for a year the PRD’s black Secretary General, Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, one of the few top level holdovers from the far more reformist PRD of the Bosch era. While Guzman was backtracking on his reformism,

At the same time, Balaguer successfully maneuvered 40 measures—including new military statutes—through a lame duck legislature that will significantly limit Guzman’s freedom of action. Civil courts will no longer have jurisdiction over members of the armed forces, and the military will have the power to decide which Dominican citizens living abroad (some in exile) can return home. In addition, under pressure from Balaguer, the Electoral Commission gave four contested Senate seats to his right-wing Revolutionary Party, assuring it a majority in that body. All legislation has to be approved by both houses....[All judges in the Republic are appointed by the Senate, including the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who would become President if Guzman or the Vice President were deposed.] Under the new legislative constraints and the continuing strength of a vigilant military, it seems unlikely the new government will change much in the Dominican Republic. Elizabeth Farnsworth, “U.S. Endorses Dominican Election: New President Has Little Room to Maneuver,” *International Bulletin*, 28 August 1978.

[156](#). The PRD moved steadily to the right following the 1965 invasion, with important

leaders killed or exiled, and with Bosch himself leaving the party in 1973 to form a new party. It has become more and more a party of the mildest sorts of reform, under the leadership of increasingly respectable men of wealth with close ties to foreign corporations and representatives of foreign powers. Philip Wheaton notes that Jacob Majluta, the vice presidential candidate, is an economist-businessman with long-standing ties to foreign companies and to Sacha Volman, a key CIA-labor operative in the Dominican Republic, now a labor adviser to Falconbridge Nickel. George Blanco, who ran on the PRD ticket as Senator for Santo Domingo, serves as a lawyer for a number of multinationals. "Dominican Republic Elections," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. XII, July-August 1978, pp. 39-41.

[157](#). We have noted elsewhere that in its search for justifications for military support of terror states, the State Department grasps at resounding promises, and the leaders of subfascism are very obliging on this point. As the Washington Office on Latin America points out in regard to the State Department treatment of the Dominican Republic:

The report admits that Amnesty was critical of human rights practices in the Dominican Republic in 1977. It goes on to cite "regrets" by Balaguer, his "signing" of the American Human Rights Convention, and his "agreement" to invite Amnesty to visit the country, an invitation which was later rescinded. In other words, the State Department accepts Balaguer's verbal promises rather than looking at actual evidence as a means of countering the Amnesty report. Balaguer is playing the game of endorsing the campaign for human rights in order to whitewash the actual violations. (Coalition For Human Rights, *Congressional Record*, 5 April 1978, H 2511.)

[158](#). See note 150, this chapter.

[159](#). "A Reporter's Notebook: For the Dominicans the Elections Is a Test of a Shaky Democracy," *New York Times* (27 May 1978).

[160](#). Deborah Sue Yaeger, "Internal Philip Morris Filings Outline Payoffs by Dominican Republic Affiliate," *Wall Street Journal* (28 December 1976).

[161](#). "Gulf & Western In The Dominican Republic: II," *CIC Brief*, November-December 1976, p. 3D.

[162](#). "Gulf & Western In The Dominican Republic," *CIC Brief*, October 1975, p. 3C.

[163](#). The phrase is attributed to "some cynics" in Alan Riding, "The Caribbean Role of G&W," *New York Times* (24 June 1974).

[164](#). Of the eight divisions of G&W's conglomerate operations, the food and agricultural products group in 1974 accounted for 6% of total revenues but 26% (\$58 million) of operating income. Most of that profitability came from G&W's Dominican sugar operations. See "Gulf & Western In the Dominican Republic," *CIC Brief*, October

1975.

- [165.](#) Stanley Penn, “Angry Investor Thinks Gulf & Western Is Trying to Block His Dominican Resort,” *Wall Street Journal* (1 June 1976).
- [166.](#) “An Employer’s Paradise: America’s sweatshop in the sun,” *Chicago Sun-Times* (26 March 1978).
- [167.](#) In its Report No. 3 on *Gulf & Western In the Dominican Republic*, dated May 1968, G&W notes that “Wage scales in the Free Zone are established by the Dominican Republic’s Secretariat of Labor....” At the time the report was written the minimum wage in the Free Zone was 55¢ an hour according to G&W (p. 53), 34¢ an hour according to Michael Flannery.
- [168.](#) In its 1978 report on Dominican Operations G&W stresses the fact that it was a successor to South Puerto Rico Sugar Company (SPR), which still controlled operations at the time of the strike-breaking. G&W contends that the SPR management was “imperious” and that there was “chronic neglect of employees, wages, working conditions and health care.” An example of imperiousness was the fact that “At 5 p.m. every day the city water supply was shut off so SPR executives could water their lawns” (p. 29). This practice was stopped immediately, and G&W contends that radical changes took place otherwise, but no independent union yet exists and wages are low. Wages are hard to measure, but G&W acknowledges that real wages per ton of sugar cane cut fell between 1966-78 (p. 61). It claims that free housing, medical services and subsidized food that it now provides make a big difference, however, and that its wages are well above those paid in government sugar operations.
- [169.](#) “U.S. team denounced Balaguer, Jesuit accuses U.S. government of ‘aid’,” *National Catholic Reporter* (3 October 1975).
- [170.](#) Michael Flannery, “Dominican guns keep unions out,” *Chicago Sun-Times* (27 March 1978).
- [171.](#) The lower echelons, visiting the Dominican Republic, have bitterly criticized the repression of the unions (*ibid.*), a consequence of the U.S. policy that is aided consistently by their AFL-CIO superiors. On the role of the AFL-CIO and CONATRAL in undermining the Bosch regime, see Suzanne Bodenheimer, “The AFL-CIO In Latin America,” *The Dominican Republic: A Case Study, Viet-Report*, September-October 1967.
- [172.](#) Jonathan Kwitny, “Strange Bedfellows From Labor, Business Own Dominican

Resort,” *Wall Street Journal* (25 May 1973).

[173.](#) An advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* (25 January 1974), p. 9.

[174.](#) See further the items cited above, notes 166-170.

[175.](#) See note 168, this chapter.

[176.](#) The October 1975 *CIC Brief* on Gulf & Western quotes a June 1975 U.S. Embassy (Santo Domingo) document on economic trends as indicating that wages have not been keeping up with prices.

[177.](#) See the discussion in “Gulf & Western In The Dominican Republic,” *CIC Brief*, November-December 1976, p. 3B.

[178.](#) “An Employer’s Paradise...”

[179.](#) See the discussion in “Gulf & Western In The Dominican Republic,” *CIC Brief*, November-December 1976, p. 3B.

[180.](#) “Open Letter to North American Christians” (signed by a number of religious leaders of Latin America, sent to the American National Council of Churches), reprinted in *Fellowship*, journal of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, September 1977.

[181.](#) Statement of General Golbery de Couto e Silva, member of the Brazilian government and chief aide to the President. Quoted in *IDOC Monthly Bulletin*, January-February 1977, p. 6. (IDOC abbreviates International Documentation; the Bulletin is a Catholic Church-affiliated service that publishes documents of international interest.)

[182.](#) See “Jose Comblin on National Security Doctrine,” a summary of the work of the leading author on this subject, with annotated bibliography, *IDOC Monthly Bulletin*, January-February 1977, pp. 3-9.

[183.](#) “The nation is absolute or it is nothing. A nation can accept no limitations of its absolute power.” (Silva, *op. cit.*, p. 3.)

[184.](#) “For many it is difficult to admit that the world is living in a situation of permanent warfare.” Col. Baciagalupo (Chile), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 4.

[185.](#) “The Third World’s armed forces are the only social organization that is cohesive, capable and efficient enough to cope with the socio-economic problems of the underdeveloped countries.” Major Claudio Lopez Silva (Chile), quoted in *ibid.*

[186.](#) *Rockefeller Report on the Americas*, Quadrangle, 1969, p. 32.

[187](#). See pp. 113-14.

[188](#). *Rockefeller Report on the Americas*, p. 58.

[189](#). Frederick O. Bonkovsky, "The German State and Protestant Elites," in Franklin H. Littell and Hubert Locke, eds., *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust*, Wayne State University, 1974, p. 136.

[190](#). Peter Hoffman, "Problems of Resistance in National Socialist Germany," in *ibid.*, p. 99.

[191](#). Bonkovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[192](#). This is a statement of members of a mission to Paraguay of the U.S. Disciples of Christ, quoted in Penny Lernoux, *Notes on a Revolutionary Church: Human Rights in Latin America*, Alicia Patterson Foundation, February 1978, p. 55.

[193](#). See the church statement quoted earlier on the relationship between "security" and the development model, pp. 61-62.

[194](#). "Voice From Northeastern Brazil to III Conference of Bishops," November 1977, *LADOC*, May-June 1978, p. 9.

[195](#). We will not review here the internal conflicts over these issues in the Catholic Church, which are far from resolution. As we have seen, the role of the churches in Latin America is complex and often destructive, to this day. (See chapter 3, section 5.3.)

[196](#). Lernoux gives an estimate of 3.5 million; *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[197](#). *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[198](#). "For Justice and Liberation," (published in Brazil by 20 lay organizations of Sao Paulo, 18 September 1977), reprinted as "Brazilian Lay People Decry Persecution of the Church," *Latinamerica Press* (20 October 1977).

[199](#). Lernoux, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[200](#). *Ibid.*

[201](#). *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[202](#). *Ibid.*

[203](#). Bishop Casadaliga, "The Gospel Is My Weapon," *Latinamerica Press* (6 November 1975).

[204.](#) Lernoux, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[205.](#) “Christian Requirements of a Political Order,” presented by the Brazilian Bishops in Itaica, Sao Paulo, 17 February 1977, reprinted in *LADOC*, January-February 1978, p. 5.

[206.](#) “The Marginalization of a People,” p. 64.

[207.](#) “The Gospel Is My Weapon,” see note 203, this chapter.

[208.](#) On the Philippines, see above, section 3; on the emergence of such conflict in South Korea, see H.H. Sunoo, *Repressive State and Resisting Church: The Policies of the CIA in South Korea*, Korean American Cultural Association, 1976.

[209.](#) The words are by Venezuelan Bishop Mariano Parra Leon, quoted in Lernoux, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[210.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

[211.](#) A Brazilian Bishop, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 19.

[212.](#) Quoted in *ibid.*

[213.](#) See chapter 1, section 9.

[214.](#) See chapter 3, section 1.

[215.](#) See, for example, the regular reports of Amnesty International, some cited above, or *Repression in Latin America*, a Report of the Russell Tribunal Session in Rome, Spokesman, Winter 1975-76. The latter is one of many studies that will never reach a U.S. audience. As in its earlier hearings on U.S. war crimes in Vietnam, the Russell inquiries lay bare the impact of the U.S. presence in their stark and brutal reality, an intolerable imposition on a free society from which its mass media thoughtfully preserve it. The Russell Tribunal on Vietnam was either ignored or vilified; the Latin American Tribunal is simply ignored. The reason for the difference is that it was impossible, under the circumstances of the 1960s, simply to ignore the Vietnam proceedings. A few years later, when it was considered appropriate by U.S. ideologists to lift the curtain on U.S. atrocities in Vietnam—that is, when powerful groups in the U.S. determined that the game was not worth the candle and that the U.S. should limit its intervention—much material of a similar sort appeared in the U.S. press, though without the systematic analysis accompanying the Russell Tribunal hearings. But that did not put an end to the denunciation of the Tribunal or of Russell personally for his association with it.

One can find occasional reference in the U.S. press to the Russell Tribunal on repression in Latin America. For example, the *Boston Globe* (1 October 1978) devoted 9 lines to a report from Rio de Janeiro that nine civilians were put on trial for having leaked information in 1969 on torture in Brazilian prisons to the Russell Tribunal, as well as to Amnesty International and the international press. The report aroused no response in a press which is in a continual uproar over the mock trials of Soviet dissidents.

- [216](#). The *New York Times*, editorializing on “Repression in Argentina” (26 May 1976), says that “what is in doubt is not General Videla’s good intentions but his ability to control military men driven by obsessions...” etc. Since the abuses in question followed Videla’s assumption of power, the placing of his good intentions as beyond doubt—without the slightest substantive evidence here or elsewhere of lack of control or agreement with the terror—is solid evidence of bias in favor of subfascism. Can one imagine, for example, comparable remarks in a *Times* editorial on the good intentions of the Cambodian government which is unfortunately unable to control local commanders or vengeful peasants?
- [217](#). “Argentines begin a chilly recovery in cold light of harsh economics,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (27 March 1977).
- [218](#). “Politics Are Only Part of Argentina’s Difficulties,” *New York Times* (20 November 1977).
- [219](#). “Rightist Terror Stirs Argentina,” *New York Times* (29 August 1976).
- [220](#). Philippe Labreveux, “Argentine: La repression se poursuit sans susciter la reprobation de la communauté internationale,” *Le Monde* (19 October 1977).
- [221](#). It should be noted that other powers, great and small, have found no problem in accommodating to the U.S.-sponsored terror system in Latin America. The USSR is one of Argentina’s main trading partners, “unwilling to alienate this supplier of wheat without which Soviet citizens will be at the mercy of the Americans in the case of a bad harvest,” and the Soviets are apparently quite unconcerned by torture and murder by state authorities, by economic policies that in two years halved the standard of living of the working class, or by the violent anti-communist ideology exuberantly proclaimed by the military. One of the first countries to offer its support to General Videla was democratic Venezuela, and the Third World generally has supported the Argentine regime, as have the European powers. See Jean-Pierre Clerc, “Un pays en état de

choc,” *Le Monde* (6 June 1978); Labreveux, *op. cit.*; Marek Halter, “Pourquoi l’Argentine,” *Le Monde* (4 February 1978).

[222](#). Michael D. Boggs and Andrew C. McLellan, “Argentine trade unions,” AFL-CIO *Free Trade Union News*, February 1978.

[223](#). For a description of one such meeting, “virtually a meeting of the Trilateral Commission,” see “The Argentine Economic Debacle,” *Argentina Outreach*, March-April 1978, pp. 2-3.

[224](#). Quoted in Christopher Knowles, “Strike wave grips Argentina,” *Guardian*, New York (16 November 1977).

[225](#). *Le Monde* (2 June 1978).

[226](#). “Open Letter;” 24 March 1977; published by the Argentine Commission for Human Rights, Washington Information Bureau, P.O. Box 2635, Washington, D.C. 20013.

[227](#). *Amnesty International Newsletter*, April 1977, volume VII, no. 4, summarizing the report of an Amnesty International Mission of November, 1976, eight months after the coup.

[228](#). *Matchbox* (AI) Spring, 1978, pp. 9-10.

[229](#). “Testimony of a Prisoner,” *Argentina Outreach*, July-August 1977, pp. 13-14. Ms Erb was a sociology student at the University of Buenos Aires. The junta position is that only guerrillas and left-wing suspects and extremists are ever put through their torture chambers. Juan de Onis assumes this rule to be true, despite the extensive evidence that the Argentinian police and military have killed and tortured the *children* of political enemies and despite the fact that the subfascist definition of “suspected subversive” could include his employer Arthur Sulzberger (just as it reached out to cover Jacobo Timmerman, the Jewish editor of *La Opinion*). In an article describing the Chilean secret police involvement in the assassination of Orlando Letelier, de Onis explained that the juntas exchange information and “cooperate” with one another (translation: allow one another’s death squads to murder at will across state lines) “in combating left wing guerrilla groups that are also structured on regional lines.” “Paraguayan Links Chilean General to Letelier Case,” *New York Times* (20 July 1978). The Letelier murder nails the lie that targets of subfascist murders are confined to “left-wing guerrilla groups,” but even in this specific context de Onis slides automatically into apologetics.

[230](#). *New York Times* (30 June 1978).

- [231](#). See “Every voice can save a life...,” A resource and action update on Argentina, American Friends Service Committee, December 1977; William Goodfellow and James Morrell, “Small Change,” 4 March 1977, mimeographed. Similar observations hold for Uruguay. Goodfellow and Morrell note that in fiscal 1976, the last year for which complete figures were available to them, the U.S. aid that has since been cut off amounted to about 7 percent of total international financing in which the United States was directly involved, since increased after the coup.
- [232](#). “Carter’s Aid: A Slap on the Wrist While Money Still Flows,” *Argentina Outreach*, March-April, 1977, p. 5.
- [233](#). See NACLA’s *Latin America & Empire Report*, January 1977, for a fuller discussion. Also Jon Steinberg, “More than a world cup,” *Seven Days*, July 1978.
- [234](#). See, among many other sources, James Petras and Morris Morley, *The United States and Chile*, Monthly Review Press, 1975; Robinson Rojas Sandford, *The Murder of Allende*, Harper and Row, 1976; John Gittings, ed., *The Lessons of Chile*, Spokesman, 1975; Amnesty International, *Chile*, AI publications, 1974.
- [235](#). *Amnesty Action*, March 1976, published by AI, U.S.A.
- [236](#). *Fellowship*, September 1977.
- [237](#). Recall the interview with Conservative leader Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, who notes that the terrorism of the Uruguayan military government began after the total destruction of the Tupamaros. (See chapter 3, pp. 103-104).
- [238](#). See A.J. Langguth, *Hidden Terrors*, Pantheon, 1978, and sources cited there. For a sympathetic Uruguayan account, see “The Tupamaros,” reprinted as a booklet from *Tricontinental*, November-December 1968, January-February 1969, March-April 1970. See also James Kohl and John Litt, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America*, MIT Press, 1974.
- [239](#). Recall the estimate by Wilson Ferreira Aldunate that the number of exiles is half a million. (See chapter 3, pp. 103-104.)
- [240](#). Juan de Onis, *New York Times* (22 November 1976).
- [241](#). See note 215. As the introduction to this volume points out, though the *Tribunal* was rather fully reported in the Italian, French and Belgian press and the Scandinavian media, the English-speaking world has ignored it, in part for reasons mentioned in note 215.

[242](#). Cf. p. 10. Eduardo Galeano, “Un petit pays dans le ‘marche commun de la mort’,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, September 1977. In an accompanying article, a “Uruguayan personality” who must remain anonymous estimates on the basis of official figures that about 12% of the population is unaccounted for, presumably abroad, including a large part of the trained and educated sectors. The two articles give an account of Uruguayan fascism and its support by the U.S. (in part through international financial institutions, overcoming the “human rights” gestures) that would be difficult to find in the U.S. press.

[243](#). Cf. Langguth, *op. cit.*, p. 253. There are similar reports of direct U.S. involvement in torture elsewhere; e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 164-65. A double agent who infiltrated the CIA from 1962 to 1970 on behalf of Cuban intelligence testified in Havana that Mitrione had personally tortured beggars to death in demonstration sessions for Uruguayan trainees. *New York Times* (5 August 1978). Cf. Langguth on Mitrione’s career and the U.S. program of terrorism in Uruguay and Brazil. (See also chapter 1, note 40.)

[244](#). A. J. Langguth, “The mind of a torturer,” *The Nation*, 24 June 1978.

[245](#). See note 236.

[246](#). On the ways in which the Russians have regularly mimicked U.S. doctrine on regional hegemony, both in rhetoric and in practice, see Thomas M. Franck and Edward Weisband, *Word Politics*, Oxford, 1971. For still earlier interactions of this nature in the latter stages of World War II, see G. Kolko, *Politics of War*, specifically, his discussion of Italy and Rumania.

[247](#). Cited by Laurence H. Shoup and William Minter, *Imperial Brain Trust*, Monthly Review, 1977, p. 197.

[248](#). See chapter 3, note 34.

[249](#). For an informative review, see Susanne Jones and David Tobis, eds., *Guatemala*, NACLA, Berkeley, 1974, and Roger Plant, *Guatemala: Unnatural Disaster*, Latin America Bureau, London, 1978. Guatemala is not the sole supplier of blood. The assassinated editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro of Nicaragua is reported to have been murdered by agents of a company “which bought the blood of impoverished Nicaraguans and exported it to the United States.” Alan Riding, *New York Times Magazine*, 30 July 1978. On the mechanism by which the poor countries of the world provide agricultural assistance to the rich, see Susan George, *How the Other Half Dies*, Allanelled, Osmun & Co., 1977; Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, *Food First*,

Houghton Mifflin, 1977; Lappe and Collins, "Food First Revisited," *Ag World*, April 1978. See also several articles in *Le Monde diplomatique*, September 1978. Gonzalo Arroyo ("L'agro-business en Amerique latine") comments that the new agri-business model spreading throughout the underdeveloped world may increase production, "but it creates disequilibrium at the regional level and in types of [agricultural] production, essentially oriented towards production of primary materials for agri-industry and/or for export. Meanwhile the increase of production is null for certain other agricultural products, in particular, basic commodities for the local population," and also tends to exhaust the soil and damage the ecological system in the interests of short-term profit.

[250](#). Plant, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[251](#). Plant, *op. cit.* p. 73, citing the English sociologist Andrew Pearse.

[252](#). *Guatemala and the Dominican Republic*, staff memorandum prepared for the use of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 30 December 1971, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1971.

[253](#). *Guatemala*, Amnesty International Briefing, London, 1976.

[254](#). *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[255](#). *Guatemala—Another Vietnam?*, Penguin, 1971, p. 293. They are quoting an embassy statement cited in a UPI dispatch by Theodore Ediger, 19 January 1968.

[256](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 14. (See note 253.)

[257](#). Amnesty International *Newletter*, April 1978, London.

[258](#). Stephen Kinzer, "Guatemala beyond Bananas," *New Republic*, 5 March 1977.

[259](#). James P. Sterba, "The quake hit a stricken land," *New York Times* (18 February 1976).

[260](#). Jonathan Dimbleby, "Kissinger Comes to the Rescue," *New Statesman* (26 March 1976).

[261](#). Alan Riding, "Free Use of Pesticides in Guatemala Takes a Deadly Toll," *New York Times* (9 November 1977).

[262](#). Marlise Simons, "Guatemala Massacre of Indians," reprinted from the *Washington Post* in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (9 July 1978).

[263](#). Amnesty International, *Newsletter*, September 1978.

- [264.](#) “Instances of the use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-1945,” pp. 82-87 (see chapter 2, note 1).
- [265.](#) Alan Riding, “National Mutiny in Nicaragua,” *New York Times Magazine*, 30 July 1978.
- [266.](#) For an illustration, see the Reuters dispatch, “Somoza Widening His Control but Foes Vow No Letup,” *New York Times* (17 February 1974).
- [267.](#) Riding, *op. cit.* (See note 265.)
- [268.](#) John Huey, “Human Rights and Nicaragua,” *Wall Street Journal* (19 September 1978).
- [269.](#) John Huey, “Business Elite Joins Struggle to Displace Nicaraguan Dictator,” *Wall Street Journal* (23 February 1978).
- [270.](#) Alan Riding, *New York Times* (3 March 1977).
- [271.](#) Alan Riding, *New York Times* (2 March 1977).
- [272.](#) See, for example, Penny Lernoux, “‘Our S.O.B.s’: The Somozas of Nicaragua,” *The Nation*, 23 July 1977; Stephen Kinzer, “Nicaragua, a Wholly Owned Subsidiary,” *New Republic*, 9 April 1977.
- [273.](#) See above, section 4.4. For more extensive background supplementing Lernoux’s valuable direct report, see *Nicaragua*, NACLA’s *Latin America and Empire Report*, February, 1976.
- [274.](#) John M. Goshko and Karen DeYoung, “‘Garbled’ Rights Message,” and Karen DeYoung, “Peasants Expect Little Help,” side-by-side on 24 October 1977.
- [275.](#) John M. Goshko, “U.S. Frees Aid to Nicaragua in a Policy Reversal,” *Washington Post* (16 May 1978).
- [276.](#) DeYoung, *op. cit.*
- [277.](#) Alan Riding, *New York Times* (12 November 1978).
- [278.](#) Smith Hempstone, “It’s Logical for Israel to Continue Supplying Weapons to Nicaragua,” *Washington Post* (3 December 1978).
- [279.](#) See Volume II, chapter 6.
- [280.](#) John Huey, “Dictator’s Decline; as Nicaragua Turmoil Intensifies, Support of Somoza Evaporates,” *Wall Street Journal* (12 September 1978). This report is largely

concerned with the “dark mood of businessmen” whose “unity against General Somoza now is almost complete.”

[281.](#) Karen DeYoung, “He Was Crying, ‘Don’t Kill Me, Don’t Kill Me!’,” *Washington Post* (20 September 1978).

[282.](#) Tad Szulc, “Rocking Nicaragua—‘The Rebels’ Own Story, Anger at Carter letter and other U.S. actions motivates pro-Castro guerrillas, a spreading problem for Washington in Central America,” *Washington Post* (3 September 1978). Szulc also found that the anti-Somoza campaign involved “virtually every civic organization in Nicaragua, including businessmen and the Roman Catholic Church,” and that its intensity was such that “any gesture toward Somoza [from Washington] would backfire.” This was the State Department assessment prior to the President’s letter to Somoza.

[283.](#) UPI, “Carter phones support to Shah; troops again fire at crowd,” *Boston Globe* (11 September 1978). (See also chapter 1, section 5, and notes 80, 88.)

[284.](#) Edward Cody, “The Shah of Iran Given Assurance of U.S. Support,” *Washington Post* (1 November 1978).

[285.](#) See chapter 1, note 43.

[286.](#) On this matter, see *Access to Oil—The United States Relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran*, report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Henry M. Jackson, Chairman, U.S. Senate, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1977. The report emphasizes Iran’s role in blocking any “threats to the continuous flow of oil through the Gulf,” which “would so endanger the Western and Japanese economies as to be grounds for general war.” It notes further that “the most serious threats may emanate from internal changes in Gulf states...if Iran is called upon [sic] to intervene in the internal affairs of any Gulf state [as it already has, with U.S. blessings and in coordination with Britain and Jordan in counterinsurgency in Oman] it must be recognized in advance by the United States that *this is the role for which Iran is being primed and blame cannot be assigned for Iran’s carrying out an implied assignment*” (p. 84, our emphasis). Thus “a strong and stable Iran” serves “as a deterrent against Soviet adventurism in the region” and “against radical groups in the Gulf” (p. 111). This is, of course, the real reason for the enormous build-up of the Iranian military by the United States and the reason why the United States found the Shah’s regime “progressive,” whatever the facts might be.

[287.](#) Alan Riding, “U.S. Strategy in Nicaragua Keeps the Time Bomb Ticking,” *New York*

Times (17 December 1978).

[288.](#) John M. Goshko, “Nicaragua: Case of Limits on U.S. Clout Abroad,” *Washington Post* (30 September 1978). On 24 September, the U.S. Senate voted to delete from the foreign aid bill “\$150,000 for military training and education [sic] in Nicaragua;” already scaled down from programs totaling \$579,000 in 1977 and \$400,000 in 1978. *Christian Science Monitor* (25 September 1978).

[289.](#) *Le Monde* (23 September 1978); translated in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (1 October 1978). One wonders when the pressure of facts will lead to some skepticism in the West about this “human rights stance.”

[290.](#) *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (1 October 1978).

[291.](#) *New York Times* (25 July 1978). For background on Bolivia, see Laurence Whitehead, *The United States and Bolivia*, Haslemere Group Publications, 515 Liverpool Road, London N7, 1969.

[292.](#) Alan Riding, *New York Times* (27 August 1975).

[293.](#) Alan Riding, “Fear Rules in El Salvador as Political Foes Turn Violent,” *New York Times* (30 July 1978).

5 Bloodbaths in Indochina: Constructive, Nefarious and Mythical

[1.](#) Examples will appear below and in Volume II.

[2.](#) In the apologetic model, of course, the civilians were terrorized by the NLF and were thus harboring the terrorists out of fear and coercion. Most of the less hysterical apologists knew that this coercion theory of support was highly suspect. (See sections 1.1 and 2.1, this chapter.)

[3.](#) Sidney Hook, “Lord Russell and the War Crimes ‘Trial’,” *New Leader* (24 October 1966); “The Knight of the Double Standard,” *The Humanist*, January 1971.

[4.](#) The restriction is regrettable as the systematic character of U.S. aggression in Indochina can only be appreciated by an account that shows how the war machine was unleashed against North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in ever more savage efforts to maintain U.S. control at least of South Vietnam. (See Volume II, chapter 1.)

[5.](#) For our own views and background for them, see Edward S. Herman and Richard B. DuBoff, *America’s Vietnam Policy, The Strategy of Deception*, Public Affairs Press, 1966; E.S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities*, Pilgrim Press, 1970; Noam

Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Pantheon, 1969; *At War with Asia*, Pantheon, 1970; *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973; and many other publications.

6. Phillipe Devillers, *Histoire du Vietnam*, Seuil, 1952, p. 337.
7. “The Problem of Democracy in Vietnam,” *The World Today* (February 1960), p. 73. Later he was to write that by 1956 “it was already clear that...[Diem]...was establishing an authoritarian regime which would tolerate no political dissent” (P.J. Honey, “Viet Nam Argument,” *Encounter*, November 1965), though if it was already clear in 1956, one did not learn this from his pen. The *Encounter* article was devoted to showing how much things were improving since the “popular revolt headed by the army” that overthrew Diem, that is, the U.S. backed military coup.
8. See sections 1.5 and 1.6, this chapter.
9. Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, Vintage, 1969, p. 29.
10. David Hotham, in Richard Lindholm, ed., *Vietnam: The First Five Years*, Michigan State, 1959, p. 359.
11. J.J. Zasloff, *Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960: The Role of the Southern Vietminh Cadres*, Rand, March 1967, p. 11.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
13. See Buttinger, *Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy*, Horizon, 1977, for some documentation on his advisory role and also for an account of his radical change in view, which led him to believe that “future historians may very likely regard the claims that in South Vietnam the United States was defending a free country against foreign aggression among the great political lies of this century” (p. 34)—a lie which, however, like others of its genre, is generally believed (or at least propounded) by the intelligentsia of the state that produced it. See, for example, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Houghton Mifflin, 1965 (Fawcett, 1967 edition, p. 695): “1962 had not been a bad year: ...aggression checked in Vietnam.” In fact, 1962 was the first year in which U.S. military forces were directly engaged in combat and combat support, bombing of villages, gunning down of peasants from helicopters, defoliation, etc. Only three years later, in April 1965, did U.S. intelligence report the presence of the first North Vietnamese battalion in the South. The “aggression” was of the sort that liberal intellectuals like to call “internal aggression”; see above, p. 99. For many more examples, see the above references of

note 5. On the internal U.S. government analysis of “North Vietnamese aggression,” see Chomsky, “The Pentagon Papers as Propaganda and as History,” in N. Chomsky and H. Zinn, eds., *The Pentagon Papers: Critical Essays*, published with an index to Volumes 1-4 as Volume V of the Senator Gravel edition of the *Pentagon Papers*, Beacon Press, 1971-72.

14. “Lösung für Vietnam,” *Neues Forum* (August/September, 1969), p. 459. Later, Buttinger was to write that “Communist control of the whole country [North and South] was achieved without the use of force, not of course because the Vietnamese Communists reject force as a means to gain power, but for the simple reason that in the absence of any effective political resistance, the Communists needed no force to establish control over the whole of Vietnam.” *Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy*, p. 17. For exactly the same reason, substantial use of force was required by the United States and its clients to suppress the Viet Minh movement that had successfully withstood the French invasion. As Buttinger remarks, “It required a tidal wave of falsehood to persuade Americans into accepting the myth that not French, but Communist, aggression was responsible for the first Indochina war” (*ibid.*, p. 22), as was constantly trumpeted by Dean Acheson and a host of sycophants.
15. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, University of California, 1971, p. 197; to date, the best account of the origins of the insurgency under the U.S.-Diem regime. There is also important material on this subject in the massive “Vietcong Motivation and Morale Study” undertaken by the Rand Corporation. For an interesting study based on this generally ignored material, see David Hunt, “Organizing for Revolution in Vietnam,” *Radical America*, vol. 8, nos. 1-2, 1974. See also Georges Chaffard, *Les deux guerres du Vietnam*, La Table Ronde, Paris, 1969. U.S. government sources, in addition to the *Pentagon Papers*, also contain much useful information: see Robert L. Sansom, *The Economics of Insurgency In the Mekong Delta*, MIT Press, 1970; Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, MIT Press, 1966 (here, one must be careful to distinguish the documentary evidence presented from the conclusions asserted); William A. Nighswonger, *Rural Pacification in Vietnam*, Praeger, 1967.
16. *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel edition, v. I, p. 259. See also the Government edition of the *Pentagon Papers*, U.S. Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-67*, 12 vols., Government Printing Office, Washington, 1971; henceforth: DOD. See note 33, this chapter.
17. *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel edition, v. I, p. 259.

[18.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[19.](#) *Ibid.*

[20.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[21.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[22.](#) Diem had publicly repudiated the Accords in January 1955 and the U.S. gave him complete support until he became a liability and was removed (indeed, eliminated) in 1963 in a U.S.-backed Generals' coup. The same record was replayed 18 years later when Washington signed a "peace agreement" in Paris in January 1973 with much fanfare (even collecting a Nobel Prize) but immediately announced with utter clarity that it had not the slightest intention of observing its terms, which it proceeded at once to subvert quite openly—all of this before the eyes of the media, which remained silent and obedient. (See Volume II, chapter 1, for some comment and references.)

[23.](#) Bernard Fall, "Vietcong—The Unseen Enemy in Vietnam," *New Society*, 22 April 1965; reprinted in Bernard Fall and Marcus G. Raskin, eds., *The Vietnam Reader*, Vintage, 1965. Fall, basically a military man, was no dove. (See chapter 3, note 44.)

[24.](#) The problem was seen to be, in part, the "tremendous sense of dependence on the U.S." of countries like the Philippines and South Korea. National Security Council Working Group Project—Courses of Action, Southeast Asia (10 November 1964), *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel edition, v. I, p. 627.

[25.](#) In the State Department's view, "a fundamental source of danger we face in the Far East derives from Communist China's rate of economic growth which will probably continue to outstrip that of free Asian countries, with the possible exception of Japan." (DOD, bk. 10, p. 1198). The Department urged that we do what we can to retard the progress of Asian Communist states. The assault on North and South Vietnam certainly contributed to that end, as did the no less violent attacks on Laos and Cambodia. We return in Volume II, chapter 1, to this theory of how to combat the dangers we face.

[26.](#) The NSC Working Group Project says that "In South Korea, there is...some discouragement at the failure to make as much progress politically and economically as North Korea (from a much more favorable initial position) has made." *Op. cit.* See note 24, this chapter. Recall that North Korea had been almost totally demolished in the Korean War, including even the bombing of dams to destroy the food supply of the population when the U.S. Air Force could find no more targets.

- [27.](#) An intelligence estimate of 1959 concluded that “development will lag behind that in the North, and the GVN will continue to rely heavily upon US support....” In the North, while life is “grim and regimented...the national effort is concentrated on building for the future.” (DOD, bk. 10, pp. 1191-1193). In essence, this forecast proved to be correct. See the quotes from Kellen, chapter 3, note 41, and text.
- [28.](#) Revised Bundy/McNaughton Draft of November 21, 1964, *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. III, p. 661.
- [29.](#) *Ibid.*
- [30.](#) Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, Norton, 1969, p. 219.
- [31.](#) Gabriel Kolko, “The American Goals in Vietnam,” *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. V, *Critical Essays*, p. 2.
- [32.](#) On this matter, see John Dower, “The Superdomino in Postwar Asia: Japan in and out of the Pentagon Papers,” in *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. V, *Critical Essays*.
- [33.](#) As should be obvious, the *Pentagon Papers*, though a useful source, must be regarded with the same caution that one would use in the case of productions, even for internal use, by scholars and bureaucrats working for other states. In fact, there is substantial misrepresentation, particularly with regard to such ideologically crucial matters as the origins of insurgency. For discussion, see Chomsky, “The Pentagon Papers as Propaganda and as History,” in *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. V, *Critical Essays*. The same is true with regard to intelligence analyses. It is necessary to study the record to see how dominated the intelligence agencies were by the framework of propaganda that they themselves were helping to construct in their disinformation campaigns. To mention one striking example, the *Pentagon Papers* analysts were able to discover only one staff paper in a record of more than two decades “which treats communist reactions primarily in terms of the separate national interests of Hanoi, Moscow, and Peiping,” rather than regarding Hanoi simply as an agent of International Communism, directed from abroad. One expects this from Dean Acheson, Dean Rusk, and the more chauvinist elements of academic scholarship, but it is surprising to find such total subordination to state dogma in the intelligence agencies as well. For discussion, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, p. 51.
- [34.](#) See NSC Working Group on Vietnam, Sec. 1: “Intelligence Assessment: The Situation in Vietnam,” 24 November 1964, Doc. 240, *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. III, pp. 651-56.

- [35](#). In an unpublished and untitled memorandum on pacification problems circulated within the military in 1965, a copy of which was given by Vann to Professor Alex Carey, University of New South Wales, Australia.
- [36](#). For the intellectual backup of a policy of terror and violence, see Charles Wolf, Jr., *United States Policy and the Third World*, Little, Brown, 1967. Wolf was Senior Economist for the Rand Corporation.
- [37](#). For references, and a general review of Komer's theories and policies, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, pp. 84f.
- [38](#). Cited by Richard Critchfield, *The Long Charade*, Harcourt Brace and World, 1968, p. 173.
- [39](#). Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers*, University Press of New England, 1977, pp. 75, 47.
- [40](#). Katsuichi Honda, *Vietnam—A Voice from the Villages*, published in English translation in Tokyo, though it never reached the status of a best-seller in the United States. (See note 48, this chapter; and note 53, chapter 1.)
- [41](#). Letter from a U.S. soldier in Vietnam to Senator Fulbright, reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, 16 June 1967.
- [42](#). See Rafael Littauer and Norman Uphoff, eds., *The Air War in Indochina*, revised edition, Beacon, 1971, p. 62.
- [43](#). *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- [44](#). Michael J. Uhl, Hearings Before Subcommittee of House Committee on Government Operations, *U.S. Assistance Programs in Vietnam* (July/August 1971), p. 315; henceforth, *U.S. Assistance Programs*. For a more extensive quote, see text at note 97, this chapter.
- [45](#). Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage*, Houghton Mifflin, 1967, p. 47.
- [46](#). Indochina Resource Center, "A Statistical Fact Sheet on the Indochina War," (27 September 1972).
- [47](#). *The Air War in Indochina*, p. 63.
- [48](#). See, for example, Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam*, Chapter 3; Seymour Hersh, *My Lai 4*, Random House, 1971; Katsuichi Honda, *Vietnam War: A Report Through Asian*

Eyes, Mirai-sha, 1972; Jonathan Schell, *The Military Half: An Account of Destruction in Quang Ngai and Quang Tin*, Vintage, 1968; James Kunen, *Standard Operating Procedure*, Avon, 1971.

49. Shimkin, who was killed in Vietnam, was an International Voluntary Services (IVS) worker who had aroused the ire of the US-Saigon authorities when he “told a *New York Times* reporter about the forced use of farm labor to clear a mine field in Ba Chuc village in the Mekong Delta when American officials there refused to act even after some of the farm people were killed and several wounded” (Don Luce, “‘Tell Your Friends That We’re People’,” in *Pentagon Papers*, v. V, *Critical Essays*). IVS was later expelled for being “too political.” Its director had protested before the Kennedy Refugee Subcommittee of the Senate on “the forced movement of the Montagnards from their mountain homes into the city slums” (Luce). Kevin Buckley was the head of the *Newsweek* Bureau in Saigon. We are indebted to Buckley for allowing us to use his original notes for the *Newsweek* article in which his account of SPEEDY EXPRESS was partially reported (“Pacification’s Deadly Price,” *Newsweek*, 19 June 1972). Quotes are from Buckley’s notes unless identified as *Newsweek*, in which case they are from the published article.
50. See Peter Braestrup, *Big Story*, Westview, vol. II, Documents, p. 20. On this Freedom House effort to show how the media undermined our noble enterprise in Vietnam, see volume II, chapter 1.
51. On the behavior of the 9th Division and its commander, see Daniel Ellsberg, “Bombing and Other Crimes,” in his *Papers on the War*, Simon & Schuster, 1972. Ellsberg writes in part on the basis of direct observation as a DOD analyst in Vietnam.
52. See the references cited in Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, pp. xx, xxxiii.
53. Earl S. Martin, *Reaching the Other Side*, Crown, 1978, pp. 133f.
54. Gordon S. Livingston, “Letter from a Vietnam Veteran,” *Saturday Review* (20 September 1969).
55. Ithiel de Sola Pool, letter, *New York Review of Books*, 13 February 1969. For news reports on the exploits of the 9th Division at the time, see Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, pp. 99f.
56. Cf. Henry Kamm, *New York Times*, 29 November 1969. This forcible evacuation complicated the task of the investigators of the My Lai massacre, he reported.

- [57](#). For references and further details, see Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, p. 104; *For Reasons of State*, p. 225; see Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 133, for an eyewitness account; also the testimony by Martin Teitel of the American Friends Service Committee, Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees, Committee on the Judiciary (Kennedy Subcommittee), U.S. Senate, 92nd Congress, Second Session, 8 May 1972. Teitel also describes US-GVN atrocities of April 1972 in the same area subsequent to the virtually bloodless liberation by the NLF-NVA—the victims, once again, included remnants of the My Lai massacre, whose torment was endless. (See note 199, this chapter.)
- [58](#). Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, Oxford, 1978, p. 143. Lewy could have referred not only to *Newsweek* but also to the material cited here from Buckley’s original notes, which had already been published. See Chomsky, “U.S. Involvement in Vietnam,” *Bridge: An Asian American Perspective*, November 1975; “From Mad Jack to Mad Henry,” *Vietnam Quarterly*, Winter 1976. In the case of Operation BOLD MARINER Lewy avoids reference either to press reports or to reports by the AFSC observers at congressional hearings and elsewhere, and thus has no need to comment on purposeful destruction of dikes to deny food and the numerous recorded atrocities, again revealing his scholarly technique in this effort to show that the United States cannot justly be accused of war crimes. Cf. Lewy, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40. We will see below (note 168, this chapter) how Lewy deals with alleged crimes of the official enemy.
- [59](#). 2000 Koreans were dispatched on 8 January 1965. The Honolulu meeting of 20 April 1965 recommended that the numbers be increased to 7,250 (just at the time of the first notice by intelligence that there might be a North Vietnamese battalion in the South; as late as July 1965 the Pentagon was still concerned over the *possibility* that there might be such forces in or near South Vietnam). See Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, p. 122, for references. Koreans are reported to have been involved in an attack on a Cambodian village in February 1967; see Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, p. 122.
- [60](#). Robert M. Smith, “Vietnam Killings Laid to Koreans,” *New York Times* (10 January 1970).
- [61](#). Craig Whitney of the *New York Times*, who was given extensive documentation on South Korean murders by Diane and Michael Jones, summarized their findings briefly toward the end of an article focusing on the future role of the South Koreans in Vietnam. Toward the beginning of his article, Whitney states that “they [the South Koreans] have been providing a military shield [Whitney does not say for whom] in a

poorly defended section of the central coast ...” (“Korean Troops End Vietnam Combat Role,” *New York Times* (9 November 1972).

62. A large number of South Korean murders were “random” in the sense of not being attributable to any ongoing military actions.
63. The Rand Corporation “Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study” of 1966, which gave documentary evidence of indiscriminate South Korean murders of civilians, was classified and suppressed. See *American Report* (28 July 1972).
64. Letter in the *New York Times*, (25 January) 1970).
65. “Security” is another Orwellism consistently applied to Vietnam by official spokesmen for the United States, and applied in analogous fashion throughout the empire. With reference to Vietnam it meant unthreatened control by the U.S. client regime in Saigon. If Saigon controlled by sheer force and violence—often the case—the people and hamlet were “secure”; if the NLF controlled without force, the hamlet and its people were “insecure”. Similarly, a National Intelligence Estimate of June 1953 gloomily discussed the inability of the French “to provide security for the Vietnamese population,” who warned the guerrillas of the presence of French Union forces, thus permitting them to take cover. In short, popular support for the Vietminh made it difficult for France to provide security for the population from the Vietminh. *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. I, p. 396.
66. See “‘Pacification’ by Calculated Frightfulness: The Testimony of Diane and Michael Jones on the Massacres of South Vietnamese Civilians by South Korean Mercenary Troops,” *Pacification Monograph Number 2*; edited with an Introduction by Edward S. Herman, Philadelphia, 1973.
67. The same tendencies quickly manifested themselves in the Australian “pacification” effort. See the documentation in Alex Carey, “Australian Atrocities in Vietnam,” Sydney, N.S.W., 1968.
68. On the interaction of U.S.-Diem terror and NLF counter-terror, see above. Nevertheless, we will adhere to the terminology of the propaganda system here and refer to the U.S. assassination programs as “counter-terror.”
69. *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 183.
70. We will not review the depressing record of apologetics. To cite one example, when Senator Kennedy, in Congressional Hearings, brought to the attention of William

Sullivan (then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs) a Saigon government report stating that the Phoenix program was launched in order to “eradicate Communist infrastructure” and that it reported “40,994 killed by assassination,” Sullivan corrected the record, noting that it said just “killed,” not “assassinated,” and then added that “some could have been killed in taking part in military action.” As for the Phoenix program, “the Phoenix, basically, is only a program for the interchange of information and intelligence,” he asserted. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, 92nd Congress, Second Session, 28 September 1972, pp. 21-22.

[71.](#) An earlier predecessor was the “counter-terror,” or “CT” program organized by the CIA in the mid-1960s to use assassination and other forms of terror against the NLF leadership and cadres. See Wayne Cooper, “Operation Phoenix: A Vietnam Fiasco Seen From Within,” *Washington Post* (8 June 1972). See also Nighswonger, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-37, on earlier U.S. efforts to develop “assassination teams” and “prosecutor-executioners.”

[72.](#) *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. II, pp. 429, 585.

[73.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 503-504.

[74.](#) *Ibid.*, v. IV, p. 578.

[75.](#) Richard S. Winslow, a former AID employee, pointed out that Phoenix program language at one time spoke of the “elimination” of VCI. “‘Elimination,’ however, gave the unfortunate impression to some Congressmen and to the interested public that someone was being ‘eliminated.’ Now the major goal is ‘neutralization’ of the VCI. Of course, the same proportion of VCI are being killed....But Congress seems mollified now that suspected Vietcong are ‘neutralized,’ rather than ‘eliminated.’” *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 244.

[76.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 207.

[77.](#) Saigon Ministry of Information, *Vietnam 1967-1971, Toward Peace and Prosperity*, 1971, p. 52.

[78.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 207.

[79.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 225.

[80.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[81.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[82.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[83.](#) For Robert Komer, writing in April 1967, the problem is that “we are just not getting enough payoff yet from the massive intelligence we are increasingly collecting. Police/military coordination is sadly lacking both in collection and in swift reaction.” *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., v. IV, p. 441.

[84.](#) *Ibid.*, v. II, p. 407, referring to the officials of Bien Hoa Province.

[85.](#) See Jon Cooper, “Operation Phoenix,” Department of History, Dartmouth, 1971, mimeographed. The IVS volunteer was Don Luce.

[86.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 314.

[87.](#) *New York Times* (13 August 1972).

[88.](#) *Washington Post* (17 February 1970).

[89.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 314.

[90.](#) Dispatch News Service International, No. 376 (6 July 1972).

[91.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 321.

[92.](#) Tad Szulc, *New York Times* (7 April 1971). Saigon costs were also borne by the U.S., overwhelmingly.

[93.](#) Frances Starner, “I’ll Do It My Way,” *FEER* (6 November 1971).

[94.](#) Richard West, “Vietnam: The Year of the Rat,” *New Statesman* (25 February 1972).

[95.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 252.

[96.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 314.

[97.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 314-15. U.S. intelligence nets were infiltrated by right-wing Vietnamese who had their own reasons for inciting terror, according to former intelligence agents. See the report by Jeffrey Stein, an agent-handler in 1968-69, *Boston Phoenix* (10 May 1972).

[98.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 321.

[99.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[100.](#) UPI, *Le Monde* (5 November 1971).

[101.](#) After the Phoenix program was officially phased out, as a result of the bad publicity it received, a new program under the code name “F-6” of a similar nature was instituted,

according to a number of former U.S. intelligence officers. Earl Martin came across some independent evidence in support of this not very surprising allegation. Shortly before the Saigon army fled from Quang Ngai (which, he reports, was liberated by NLF troops without a shot being fired), Martin was picked up by the Saigon army and kept briefly in the local Provincial Interrogation Center, where the main torturers had operated. He happened to notice an organizational chart on which every number began with “F-6.” *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

It is interesting to see how the indiscriminate character of Phoenix murders is used by some of the current apologists for U.S. terrorism in Indochina. Guenter Lewy, for example, points out that very few of those killed under the Phoenix program were specifically targeted. He argues that “the fact that so few of those killed were on the Phoenix target list certainly undermines the charge that the Phoenix program was a program of planned assassinations” (*op. cit.*, p. 281). The logic is astounding. Actually, the facts Lewy cites merely show that this program of planned assassination degenerated into indiscriminate slaughter, as we have discussed, not a surprising fact given the background and context, which Lewy characteristically ignores in his apologetics. As in the cases noted earlier (see note 58, this chapter), Lewy selectively cites government documents, carefully omitting testimony from participants in Phoenix operations or reports by journalists and others on the scene that would permit a serious scholar to determine the character and significance of the programs he seeks to justify.

[102.](#) Nazi extermination camps, of course, occupy a place by themselves, but for systematic torture and brutalization of ordinary citizens, often using sophisticated technology, the “Free Vietnam” established by U.S. force bears comparison to European fascism.

[103.](#) For extensive documentation on this point, see *After the Signing of the Paris Agreements, Documents on South Vietnam’s Political Prisoners*, Narmic-VRC (June 1973), p. 27; Communauté Vietnamiennne, *Saigon: un régime en question: les prisonniers politiques*, Sudestasie, Paris, 1974; *A Cry of Alarm, New Revelations on Repression and Deportations in South Vietnam*, Saigon, 1972; Jean-Pierre Debris and André Menras, *Rescapés des bagnes de Saigon, nous accusons*, Editeurs Francais Réunis, Paris, 1973; *The Forgotten Prisoners of Nguyen Van Thieu*, Paris, May 1973; Holmes Brown and Don Luce, *Hostages of War, Saigon’s Political Prisoners*, 1973, Indochina Mobile Education Project; Pham Tam, *Imprisonment and Torture in South Vietnam*, Fellowship of Reconciliation, undated; *Prisonniers Politiques au Sud*

Vietnam, *Listes de Prisonniers, Appel des 30 Mouvements*, Saigon, February 1973.

[104.](#) Quoted in Brown and Luce, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[105.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[106.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[107.](#) Quaker Team in Quang Ngai Province, "To Report Truthfully on the Treatment of Prisoners in 1972."

[108.](#) *After the Signing*, p. 32.

[109.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 314.

[110.](#) *After the Signing*, p. 27.

[111.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

[112.](#) *After the Signing*, p. 33.

[113.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

[114.](#) Michael Field, *The Prevailing Wind: Witness in Indo-China*, Methuen, 1965, p. 210.

[115.](#) "M. Thieu...appliquons la loi des cowboys," *Le Monde* (27 January 1973).

[116.](#) Nothing new in that. For example, the May 1969 meeting of the Council on Vietnamese Studies, which pretended to be a scholarly organization, was devoted to a discussion led by Harvard's Samuel Huntington on the apparently insuperable problems that would face the U.S. and its local client if compelled to enter into political competition with the NLF, admittedly "the most powerful purely political national organization." Huntington suggested various forms of deceit and chicanery that might overcome the advantages of the enemy, but apparently without convincing his more skeptical colleagues. For discussion, in the context of the plans being developed in the early 1970s by U.S. scholars for incorporating South Vietnam permanently within the U.S. system, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, chapter 4.

[117.](#) *Boston Globe* (24 June 1972).

[118.](#) *San Francisco Chronicle* (4 June 1972).

[119.](#) Cited in *Saigon: un régime en question*, p. 69, from the *Washington Post* (10 November 1972), in a discussion of the intensifying terror.

[120.](#) *Le Monde* (17 May 1973).

- [121.](#) Chris Jenkins, “Thieu’s Campaign of Terror,” *American Report* (29 January 1973); letter of the Committee Campaigning for the Improvement of the Prison System of South Vietnam (9 December 1972); *After the Signing*, pp. 35ff.
- [122.](#) Sylvan Fox, “Saigon Bypasses Accord by Freeing Many Prisoners,” *New York Times* (6 February 1973).
- [123.](#) The press also failed to note the suspiciousness of the huge number (40,000) allegedly being released, and the illogic in the contention that the political component, numbering 10,000, had “renounced Communism.” (All at once? If not, why were they held to this point?)
- [124.](#) *Prison News* of the Committee Campaigning for the Improvement of the Prison System of South Vietnam (14 December 1972).
- [125.](#) *Prison News* (9 December 1972); Ngo Vinh Long, “Thieu starving refugees to keep the throne,” *Boston Phoenix* (12 December 1972), citing South Vietnamese newspaper reports; *Prison News* (9 December 1972); *After the Signing*, pp. 35ff.
- [126.](#) *Le Monde* (3 January 1973).
- [127.](#) *Ibid.*
- [128.](#) *New York Times* (27 January 1973).
- [129.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 5.
- [130.](#) GAO Report (July 1972), p. 42.
- [131.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, p. 197.
- [132.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- [133.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- [134.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 179. (Our emphasis.)
- [135.](#) AID, Fiscal 1971 Program and Project Data Presentation to Congress; cited by Michael T. Klare, “America’s Global Police,” *American Report*, 15 September 1972.
- [136.](#) See pp. 55-56.
- [137.](#) *U.S. Assistance Programs*, pp. 186ff. One illustration of “improvement” cited by William Colby was that confessions obtained during “interrogations,” which “used to be used exclusively...are not used exclusively any more.” p. 197.
- [138.](#) Quoted in Brown and Luce, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[139.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[140.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[141.](#) For a discussion of the 1967 attack on Dak Son and this general issue, see Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam*, pp. 46-54.

[142.](#) The quote is from a captured Communist document dated March 1960, cited at length in Race, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-119. The specific quote is on p. 119.

[143.](#) Douglas Pike, *Vietcong*, pp. 91-92.

[144.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 101. This conclusion is generally accepted even by scholars who bend over backwards to find evidence for Hanoi's aggression. See, e.g., King C. Chen, "Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Summer 1975: "It was the growing military campaign of the Diem regime against the Communists with America's support that compelled Hanoi to decide to revert to war." p. 258.

[145.](#) Race, *op. cit.*, p. 184. Law 10/59 initiated a system of military courts that, within three days of a charge, were to sentence to death "whoever commits or attempts to commit...crimes with the aim of sabotage, or of infringing upon the security of the State" (Article 1), as well as "whoever belongs to an organization designed to help to prepare or to perpetrate [these] crimes" (Article 3). This law made all dissent and opposition subversive and punishable by death.

[146.](#) However absurd it may be, this picture was widely disseminated throughout the Indochina War, and still is, in essence: For example, it is seriously argued today that a tiny group of Paris-educated fanatics ("nine men at the top") held the entire country of Cambodia in their grip as they proceeded systematically to massacre and starve the population—the reason for this policy, according to the widely praised account that has reached by far the largest international audience, may be that their leader suffers from "chronic impotence." The same authorities (John Barron and Anthony Paul of the *Readers Digest*) hold that a tiny group of completely inconsequential leaders succeeded through the use of terror to organize a force capable of defeating the world's greatest military power and the government it supported. This is put forth with utter seriousness in a work lauded for its insights throughout the Western world. Meanwhile another authority regarded with much awe among the intelligentsia (Francois Ponchaud) assures us that the group of fanatics who held the terrorized country in their iron grasp were proceeding to eliminate some 5-7 million people out of a total of 8 million,

including all but the young. For discussion of these ideas and the evidence that is advanced to support them, see Volume II, chapter 6. As will be seen, the characterization just given is literally accurate.

[147.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97. Emphasis added.

[148.](#) *Op. cit.*, pp. 188-89, note 25.

[149.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[150.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

[151.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95, 116, 184ff.

[152.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[153.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[154.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 200. After talking with the Saigon leadership in 1965, James Reston wrote: “Even Premier Ky told this reporter today that the communists were closer to the people’s yearnings for social justice and an independent life than his own government.” *New York Times* (1 September 1965). It was a constant refrain apart from propaganda exercises.

[155.](#) Race, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[156.](#) These reports reached flood proportions during the DRV offensive of 1972, with the *New York Times* contributing its share in the writings of Joseph Treaster and Fox Butterfield. Their reports, heavily dependent on official handouts of Saigon and U.S. information officers, do not withstand close scrutiny. See, for example, Tom Fox, “The Binh Dinh ‘Massacre’,” *American Report* (15 September 1972); *Le Monde*, 28-29 May 1972 (report of interviews with refugees by an AFP special correspondent). See also notes 174, 198, 199, this chapter. (See Volume II for many additional examples.)

[157.](#) When we speak of “mythical bloodbath” we do not mean to imply that no killings took place. In fact they did, on a considerable scale. But the evidence seems to us decisive that the core of truth was distorted, misrepresented, inflated and embellished with sheer fabrication for propaganda purposes. As to the events themselves, we are not attempting to offer any definitive account, but rather to compare the evidence available with its interpretation by the government and the media.

[158.](#) This system of responsiveness extended into the military sphere, helping to explain the “astonishing” fighting capacity and “almost incredibly resilient morale” of DRV

soldiers, who benefit from a system of “morale restitution...designed to lend great emotional and physical support to its members,” a system which “anticipates and alleviates possible future morale troubles.” Konrad Kellen, “1971 and Beyond: The View from Hanoi,” Rand Corporation, June 1971, p. 9.

[159.](#) In R.N. Pfeffer, ed., *No More Vietnams?*, Harper and Row, 1968, p. 227.

[160.](#) Race, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-83, note 22.

[161.](#) Diane Johnstone, “‘Communist Bloodbath’ in North Vietnam is Propaganda Myth, says former Saigon Psychological Warfare Chief,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (24 September 1972).

[162.](#) The analysis that follows is based on D. Gareth Porter, *The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam’s Land Reform Reconsidered*, International Relations of East Asia, Interim Report No. 2, Cornell, 1972. See also the abbreviated version in the *Bulletin of the Concerned Asian Scholars*, September 1973.

[163.](#) *Myth of the Bloodbath*, pp. 26-28.

[164.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

[165.](#) “Figure on N. Vietnam’s Killing ‘Just a Guess,’ Author Says,” *The Washington Post* (13 September 1972).

[166.](#) Late 1954 was also a period of famine in much of North Vietnam, affecting the very area in which Chi had lived, which further compromises his inferences drawn from a count of village deaths by starvation.

[167.](#) *Fire in the Lake*, Little, Brown, 1972, p. 223. FitzGerald gives no footnote reference for this estimate, but she relies heavily on Fall and her language is similar to his.

[168.](#) Author (not Congressman) Michael Harrington writes that he and other “socialist cadre... knew that Ho and his comrades had killed thousands of peasants during forced collectivization in North Vietnam during the ’50s (a fact they themselves had confessed).” *Dissent* (Spring 1973). In fact, the only known “confessions” are the fabrications that had been exposed many months earlier, and neither Harrington nor other Western observers “know” what took place during the land reform. Note the claim that “Ho and his comrades had killed thousands of peasants,” when in fact there is no evidence that the leadership ordered or organized mass executions of peasants.

Guente Lewy writes that “the Communists in the North had severe problems with their own ‘counterrevolutionaries’. In 1955-56 perhaps as many as 50,000 were

executed in connection with the land reform law of 1953....A North Vietnamese exile puts the number of victims at one-half million” (*op. cit.*, p. 16). His two footnote references for these estimates are Chi for the latter and Fall (who appears to have relied on Chi) for the former. Lewy then adds, “Attempts by the Hanoi sympathizer D. Gareth Porter to deny the scope of this terror remain unconvincing.” This exhausts Lewy’s discussion, and once again reveals clearly the scholarly standards of this apologist for U.S. terror. The material just reviewed is nowhere discussed. For Lewy, an extrapolation from one execution reported in one village by a highly unreliable source to an estimate of 50,000 executions (or 500,000 victims) for all of North Vietnam is quite legitimate, and there is no need to concern oneself over Chi’s demonstrated fabrications, Chau’s report that the whole story was an intelligence fabrication, the results of Moise’s careful study (see note 170, this chapter), or any of the abundant evidence that calls this parody into question. This reference to alleged crimes of the enemy is a natural counterpart to Lewy’s efforts to deny U.S. crimes, in the manner already illustrated (see notes 58 and 101, this chapter).

[169.](#) Porter, *Myth of the Bloodbath*, p. 55. We return in Volume II to 1978 repetitions of the long-exposed propaganda fabrications, in addition to Lewy.

[170.](#) See his “Land Reform and Land Reform Errors in North Vietnam,” *Pacific Affairs*, Spring 1976, and his University of Michigan Ph.D dissertation, 1978. We quote from the former.

[171.](#) The analysis below is based primarily on D. Gareth Porter, “U.S. Political Warfare in Vietnam—The 1968 ‘Hue Massacre’,” *Indochina Chronicle*, No. 33, 24 June 1974 (reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, 19 February 1975); and Edward S. Herman and D. Gareth Porter, “The Myth of the Hue Massacre,” *Ramparts*, May-June 1975. See also references cited below.

[172.](#) Stewart Harris, *London Times* (27 March 1968).

[173.](#) Marc Riboud, *Le Monde*, (13 April 1968). Riboud reports 4,000 civilians killed during the reconquest of the “assassinated city” of Hue by U.S. forces.

[174.](#) Report by John Sullivan of the AFSC, 9 May 1968. He reports that none of the AFSC workers who were in Hue throughout the fighting had heard of abusive or atrocious behavior by the NLF-NVA.

[175.](#) Len Ackland, “Hue,” unpublished; one of the sources used by Don Oberdorfer in his *Tet*, Doubleday and Co., 1971.

- [176](#). Richard West, *New Statesman*, (28 January 1972).
- [177](#). And despite Pike's government position and quite remarkable record as a propagandist. For some samples, see N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, pp. 365-66.
- [178](#). *Fire in the Lake*, pp. 174-75. In a subsequent edition of her book, FitzGerald qualified her earlier wholesale acceptance of the myth, but the impact was slight.
- [179](#). *New York Times*, Op.-Ed. (15 June 1972). In his book, *No Exit From Vietnam*, McKay, Updated Edition, 1970, Thompson says, "Normally Communist behavior toward the mass of the population is irreproachable and the use of terror is highly selective" (p. 40); but that work, while biased, involved some effort at understanding and contained a residue of integrity, entirely absent in the *New York Times* piece.
- [180](#). Porter, "U.S. Political Warfare in Vietnam."
- [181](#). *Ibid*.
- [182](#). *Ibid*.
- [183](#). *Ibid*.
- [184](#). Quoted in Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention*, McKay, 1969, p. 142.
- [185](#). *Vietnam Inc.*, Macmillan, 1971, p. 137.
- [186](#). Cited in Herman and Porter, *op. cit*.
- [187](#). See Harris, *op. cit*.
- [188](#). *Op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.
- [189](#). Riboud, *op. cit*.
- [190](#). See Wilfred Burchett, *Guardian* (New York), 6 December 1969.
- [191](#). Riboud, *op. cit*.
- [192](#). Interview with Mr. Tony Zangrilli (2 February 1973).
- [193](#). Alje Vennema, *The Tragedy of Hue*, unpublished; quoted by Porter, *op. cit*.
Subsequently Vennema changed his views on Hue. He returned for a visit during which he collected secondary and tertiary source information, which he then used in a book in which his own personal first hand observations were shunted aside. See Alje Vennema, *The Viet Cong Massacre At Hue*, Vantage Press, 1976.

- [194.](#) Oriana Fallaci, “Working Up to Killing,” *Washington Monthly* (February 1972).
- [195.](#) John Lengel, AP, A010—Hue Descriptive, 10 February 1968, cited by Peter Braestrup, *Big Story*, Westview Press, volume I, pp. 268-69. After the reference to a psychological warfare program pinning the blame on the Communists, Braestrup adds a footnote that reads: “At this point, the ‘Hue massacre’ by the Vietcong was still unknown to newsmen.” It naturally does not occur to him to ask whether this “massacre” may not relate to the psywar program so desperately needed. While Braestrup cites Porter’s critique, he assumes without comment or discussion that the official line must be correct, as does his Freedom House sponsor, a typical manifestation of subservience to official dogmas. See note 168, this chapter. We return to some discussion of the Braestrup-Freedom House version of history in Volume II, chapter 1.
- [196.](#) D. Gareth Porter and Len E. Ackland, “Vietnam: The Bloodbath Argument,” *Christian Century* (5 November 1969).
- [197.](#) *Ibid.*
- [198.](#) Katsuichi Honda, *Vietnam War: A Report Through Asian Eyes*, pp. 55-69.
- [199.](#) Martin Teitel, *op. cit.*, p. 17 (see note 57, this chapter); “Again, the suffering of My Lai,” *New York Times* (7 June 1972). In the same Senate Hearings Teitel reports other instances of terrorism attributed to the NLF but apparently carried out by ARVN.

5 Appendix

- [1.](#) Hospitalized prisoners are chained.
- [2.](#) It appears, in fact, that if freedom of movement were re-established at the same time as democratic liberties, the great majority of the province would opt for the P.R.G. One of the “liberated zones” begins only three kilometers from the town of Quang Ngai (N.D.L.R.).

Table 1

Country	Strategic Political Dates ¹	Positive (+) or Negative (-) Effects on Democracy ²	(3) —1 means an increased use of torture or death squads	(4) —1 means an increase in No. of political prisoners	(5a) Improvement in Investment Climate (tax laws eased +1)	(5b) Improvement in Investment Climate: labor repressed +1	(6) Economic Aid (% change)	(7) Military Aid (% change)	(8) (6) + (7) (% change)	(9) U.S. and Multi- national Credits (% change)	(10) Total Aid (8) + (9) (% change)
Brazil	1964	—	—	—	—	—	+ 14	— 40	— 26	+ 180	+ 154
Chile	1973	—	—	—	—	—	+ 558	— 8	+ 550	+ 1,079	+ 770
Dominican Republic	1965	—	—	—	—	—	+ 57	+ 40	+ 97	+ 305	+ 133
Guatemala	1964	—	—	—	—	—	— 81	— 79	— 160	+ 653	+ 62
Indonesia	1965	—	—	—	—	—	— 204	+ 67	— 137	— 900	— 62
Iran	1953	—	—	—	—	—	— 52	— 56	— 108	+ 103	— 9
Philippines	1972	—	—	—	—	—	— 64	— 64	— 128	+ 210	+ 5
South Korea	1973	—	—	—	—	—	— 41	+ 9	— 32	+ 32	+ 21
Thailand	1973	—	—	—	—	—	— 41	+ 9	— 32	+ 32	+ 21
Uruguay	1973	—	—	—	—	—	— 41	+ 9	— 32	+ 32	+ 21

U.S. Aid, Investment Climate, and Human Rights in Ten Countries

Sources: 1. Information on torture and political prisoners mostly from the Amnesty International Report on Torture, 1973, and The Amnesty International Report, 1973-74, 1976. Supplemental with data from investigative articles, journals, and books on the specific countries. Data on investment climate largely from articles, journals, and books on the specific countries.

2. Data on aid taken from U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations, AID, 1973 and 1976 editions, for years 1962-1975. Data previous to 1962 taken from Historical Statistics of the United States, Bicentennial Edition, Dept. of Commerce, 1975.

Table 2

U.S. Military and Economic Aid to Selected Human Rights Violators, Fiscal Years 1973-78						
(Current dollars, in millions)						
Fiscal Years 1973-77						
Country	Military aid grants ^{1,2}	Military sales credits ¹	Total arms sales ^{1,4}	Total economic aid ^{2,3}	Number of military trainees ³	F.Y. 1978 Proposed military aid (grants & credits) ^{1,4}
ARGENTINA	2.2	134.0	98.6	—	689	15.7
BRAZIL	3.4	230.7	258.3	93.3	1,062	50.1
CHILE	2.5	27.4	146.6	226.7	1,391	—
ETHIOPIA	93.2	46.0	200.6	111.0	736	12.1
INDONESIA	107.9	54.7	91.8	634.2	1,272	58.4
IRAN	0.3	—	13,677.3	5.4	—	—
PHILIPPINES	124.4	60.0	194.7	383.5	1,460	41.4
SOUTH KOREA	601.1	552.4	1,033.1	487.0	2,741	280.4
THAILAND	229.4	74.7	220.3	91.4	7,655	40.5
URUGUAY	9.0	12.0	16.9	22.8	717	—
Totals:	1,133.4	1,191.9	18,238.2	2,055.3	12,723	498.6

¹Source: 1973-76 data: U.S. Department of Defense, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* (Washington, 1976); 1977-78 data: U.S. Department of Defense, *Security Assistance Program, Presentation to Congress*, F.Y. 1975 (Washington, 1977).

²Source: U.S. Agency for Development, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants, July 1 1945-June 30 1975* (Washington, 1975), and additional tables supplied by USAID.

³Includes deliveries of excess defense articles and training costs under the International Military and Education Training Program.

⁴Includes the Foreign Military Sales and Commercial Sales programs.

⁵Includes economic assistance (loans and grants), Food for Peace aid, Security Supporting Assistance, and smaller provisions.

⁶Includes MAP grants, training costs, excess defense articles, and FMS credits.

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About the Authors



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With a new preface by the authors

NOAM CHOMSKY
EDWARD S. HERMAN

AFTER THE CATAclySM

Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology
The Political Economy of Human Rights—Volume II



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After the Cataclysm:

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The Political Economy of Human Rights:
Volume II

Noam Chomsky
and Edward S. Herman

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Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology

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Preface to the 2014 Edition

Our study *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, originally published 25 years ago, consists of two volumes, closely interrelated. The first, entitled *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, reviews the horrendous reign of terror, torture, violence and slaughter that Washington unleashed against much of the world in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily in the western hemisphere and Southeast Asia, including U.S. aggression in Indochina, surely the worst crime of the post-World War II era. The second volume, *After the Cataclysm*, reviews the immediate aftermath in Indochina along with some relevant but overlooked comparative and historical material.

As discussed in the preface to the original publication, the two volumes are devoted to both facts and beliefs: the facts insofar as they could be obtained, and beliefs arising from the way facts were selected and interpreted through the distorting prism of a very powerful ideological system, which gains much of its power from the belief that it is free and independent.

The earlier history of *PEHR*, reviewed in a prefatory note to the first volume, illustrates some of the interesting features of the doctrinal system. In brief, an earlier version was published by a small but successful publisher, owned by a major conglomerate. An executive of the conglomerate was offended by its contents, and in order to prevent its appearance shut down the publisher, effectively destroying all its stock. With very rare exceptions, civil libertarians in the U.S. saw no problem in these actions, presumably because control of expression by concentrated private power, as distinct from the state, is considered not only legitimate but even an exercise of “freedom,” in a perverse sense of “freedom” that finds a natural place in the prevailing radically anti-libertarian ideology (often called “liberal” or even “libertarian,” a matter that will not surprise readers of Orwell).

Elsewhere, we have discussed the general character of the doctrinal system more explicitly, reviewing its consequences in a wide array of domains.¹

One useful perspective on the ideological system is provided by a comparison of treatment by media and commentary of *their crimes and our own*—both the reporting of the facts and the propaganda system’s reaction to each. There was a highly revealing illustration at the time we were writing in 1977-78: the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in December 1975, and the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia in April 1975. Our two longest and most detailed chapters review these two cases: East Timor in Volume I,

Cambodia in Volume II.

In both cases, information was quite limited. In the case of East Timor, knowledge of the facts was limited by design: a good deal was quite accessible, including coverage in the Australian press. In the case of Cambodia, in contrast, reliable facts were very hard to obtain.

There was, however, extensive information about the second element of our inquiry: the belief systems that were constructed. In the case of East Timor, the U.S. reaction was brief: silence or denial. In the case of Cambodia, as we reviewed in detail, the reaction was unrestrained horror at the acts of unspeakable brutality, demonstrating the ultimate evil of the global enemy and its Marxist-Leninist doctrines.

The comparison is revealing. In both cases, it was clear that terrible crimes were in process, in the same area of the world, in the same years. There was one striking difference between the two cases. The crimes underway in Cambodia could be attributed to an official enemy (at least if U.S. actions, directly death-dealing and also helping lay the basis for further deaths are overlooked, as they were) and no one had a suggestion as to what might be done to mitigate or end them. In the case of East Timor, the crimes unequivocally traced back to Washington, which gave the “green light” for the invasion and provided critical military and diplomatic support for the vast atrocities (with the help of its allies), and they could have been ended very easily, simply by orders from Washington. That conclusion, never seriously in doubt, was demonstrated in September 1999, when President Clinton, under intense domestic and international pressure, quietly informed the Indonesian generals that the game was over. They instantly abandoned their strenuous claims to the territory and withdrew, allowing a UN peace-keeping force to enter. In a display of cynicism that mere words cannot capture, this was interpreted as a “humanitarian intervention,” a sign of the nobility of the West.²

Our chapter on East Timor was far and away the most important in the two volumes, precisely because the huge ongoing crimes could have so readily been ended. It passed without mention in the doctrinal system—as, indeed, did our detailed review of many other U.S. crimes. In dramatic contrast, a sizable literature has been devoted to our chapter on Cambodia, desperately seeking to discover some error, and with unsupported and unjustifiable claims about our alleged apologetics for Pol Pot. We reviewed those that were even mildly serious in *Manufacturing Consent*, and there should be no need to do so again.

While evidence about Cambodia in 1978 was slim, enough existed to make it clear, as

we wrote, that “the record of atrocities in Cambodia is substantial and often gruesome,” with “a fearful toll,” though the available facts bore little relation to the huge chorus of denunciation of the genocidal Marxist rulers. Not all joined in the chorus, including some of the most knowledgeable and respected correspondents, among them Nayan Chanda of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The most striking exceptions were the few people who actually had some significant information about what was happening: the State Department Cambodia specialists, who stressed the limited nature of evidence available at the time we wrote and estimated that deaths from all causes were probably in the “tens if not hundreds of thousands,” largely from disease, malnutrition, and “brutal, rapid change,” not “mass genocide.”

Such sources, however, were not useful for the task of ideological reconstruction, so they were ignored. And the tasks were serious ones. One crucial task was to suppress the hideous crimes that the U.S. had committed in Indochina, and even justify them by invoking the catastrophe when the U.S. finally withdrew. That includes Cambodia, where the U.S. air force executed Henry Kissinger’s orders (originating with Nixon) for “A massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. Anything that flies on anything that moves” in rural Cambodia. A related task was to turn the anti-war movement into the guilty parties by charging them with denying enemy crimes and even for preventing (non-existent) Western efforts to overcome them. Amazingly, Western intellectuals even rose to these demands.³

When some information about East Timor finally seeped through the ideological filters, it became necessary to explain why the U.S. government had been so fully engaged in these terrible crimes—which went on through 1999—and why the Free Press had failed to bring them to public attention while focusing attention on crimes of the official enemy that were beyond our control. The obvious explanation, confirmed in innumerable other cases, could not be accepted. A “more structurally serious explanation” was offered by the respected correspondent William Shawcross: “a comparative lack of sources” and lack of access to refugees. In short, the extensive information in the Australian media was unavailable to Western journalists in comparison to the very scattered data about Cambodia; and it is far more difficult to travel to Lisbon or Melbourne to interview the thousands of refugees there than to trek through the jungle on the Thai-Cambodia border.

Most chose a different approach. James Fallows explained that the U.S. “averted its eyes from East Timor” and “could have done far more than it did to distance itself from the carnage”—the carnage that it was purposefully implementing. Later, in her famous

study of our failure to respond properly to the crimes of others, current UN Ambassador Samantha Power wrote that “the United States looked away” when Indonesia invaded East Timor, killing perhaps one-fourth of its population. In fact, the U.S. looked right there from the first moment, and continued to for 25 years until finally deciding to end the criminal aggression by its favored client.⁴

The basic facts were never obscure, at least to those interested in their own responsibility for what happens in the world. When Indonesia invaded, the UN sought to react but was blocked by the United States. The reasons were explained by UN Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan, widely lauded as a dedicated advocate of international law and morality. In his 1978 memoirs, he wrote with pride about his achievements after the Indonesian invasion and its grim aftermath, of which, he makes clear, he was well aware. In his words: “The United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.”⁵

Khmer Rouge atrocities peaked in 1978, and were ended when Vietnam invaded and drove the Khmer Rouge out of the country. The U.S. immediately turned to supporting the Khmer Rouge under the name “Democratic Kampuchea,” while continuing its support of Indonesia’s ongoing crimes in East Timor. The reasons were candidly explained by the State Department: the “continuity” of Democratic Kampuchea with the Pol Pot regime “unquestionably” made it “more representative of the Cambodian people than the [Timorese resistance] Fretilin is of the Timorese people.”⁶

The doctrinal system remained unaffected.

The pattern is pervasive. To move to another area, consider Latin America, the traditional U.S. “backyard.” In Volume I, we reviewed some of the horrifying consequences of U.S. policies there from the early 1960s. The plague of repression that spread over the continent hit Central America with full force after we wrote, always with crucial U.S. participation and initiative. The general picture is well known to scholarship. John Coatsworth observes that from 1960 to “the Soviet collapse in 1990, the numbers of political prisoners, torture victims, and executions of non-violent political dissenters in Latin America vastly exceeded those in the Soviet Union and its East European satellites,”⁷ including many religious martyrs, and mass slaughter as well, consistently supported or initiated in Washington. Needless to say, the conventional picture within the ideological system is reversed.

Another and related reversal is even more dramatic. In recent years, much of Latin America has broken free from U.S. domination, a development of enormous historical significance, illustrated in many ways. One has to do with the topic of our study. During the period we reviewed, Latin America was a primary center of torture worldwide. No longer. The extent to which that has changed is revealed in an important study by the Open Society Foundation that reviewed global participation in the CIA program of extraordinary rendition. This program, initiated by George W. Bush, sends suspects to favored dictators so that they can be tortured and might provide some testimony—true or false, it doesn't much matter—that can be used to expedite U.S. terror operations.⁸ Virtually the entire world participated: the Middle East, of course, because that was where the selected torturers were, and most of Europe. In fact only one region was absent from the record of shame: Latin America.⁹

The implications are evident, and have reached the doctrinal system in much the same fashion as those reviewed at length in these two volumes.

Preface

This is a companion volume to *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*. The final chapter of Volume I examined U.S. intervention in Vietnam up to the collapse of the Saigon regime in April 1975, including its real and nominal purposes, the balance and interplay of terror and violence, and the images constructed by the propaganda system. The main body of this volume (chapters 4, 5, 6) is devoted to the postwar condition of the three states of Indochina: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (Kampuchea) respectively. The time frame of the discussion is from mid-1975 to the end of 1978. As in Volume I, the discussion has a double focus: on Indochina itself and on the West (primarily, the United States) in relation to Indochina. We will consider the facts about postwar Indochina insofar as they can be ascertained, but a major emphasis will be on the ways in which these facts have been interpreted, filtered, distorted or modified by the ideological institutions of the West.

Chapter 1 presents the general background. In chapter 2, we review some historical precedents reflecting our dual concern: specifically, we will consider the treatment of the defeated enemy during and after other conflicts, and the ways in which the Western intelligentsia have tended to relate to state power in the past. In chapter 3 we turn to the interesting pattern of responses in the West to the plight of refugees during the period under review. In this preface, we will take note of several themes that will be developed in detail in chapters 4-6 and also consider the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict and the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnamese forces in December 1978-January 1979, which brought to an end the first phase of the postwar era and set the stage for a new period which, we suspect, will bring renewed agony and bloodshed to Indochina.

The ferocious U.S. attack on Indochina left the countries devastated, facing almost insuperable problems. The agricultural systems of these peasant societies were seriously damaged or destroyed. Much of the population was driven into urban slums, in part, in a conscious effort to destroy the social base of the revolutionary movement, in part as an inevitable consequence of the unleashing of advanced military technology against defenseless rural peoples. With the economies in ruins, the foreign aid that kept much of the population alive terminated, and the artificial colonial implantations no longer functioning, it was a condition of survival to turn (or return) the populations to productive work. The victors in Cambodia undertook drastic and often brutal measures to accomplish this task, simply forcing the urban population to the countryside where they were

compelled to live the lives of poor peasants, now organized in a decentralized system of communes. At a heavy cost, these measures appear to have overcome the dire and destructive consequences of the U.S. war by 1978.

Vietnam, in contrast, actually diverted very scarce resources in an effort to maintain the artificially inflated living standards of the more privileged sectors of Saigonese society, while encouraging migration to “new economic zones” in which productive work could be undertaken. “For almost three years, the capitalist heart of southern Vietnam remained largely untouched by the country’s new communist rulers,”¹ a dependent and unproductive economic sector that the country could hardly tolerate for long. In March 1978 private businesses were closed in Saigon and measures were introduced to eliminate cash hoarding: “Convinced that a harsh life of agricultural labour awaits them in Vietnam’s ‘new economic zones,’ thousands of ethnic Chinese from Cholon have fled the country in small fishing boats...”² The exodus was accelerated by intensifying conflict between Vietnam and China and by the disastrous floods of the fall of 1978, which had an extremely severe effect throughout the region, leading to serious food shortages except in Cambodia, which was apparently able to overcome the disaster effectively. In a sense, the refugee flow from Vietnam in 1978 is comparable to the forced resettlement of the urban population of Cambodia in 1975. Meanwhile in Laos, efforts to return peasants to their homes in areas devastated by the U.S. attack appear to have been fairly successful, and there has also been an exodus of more privileged urban elements to Thailand, along with a far larger flight of mountain tribesmen who had been organized by the CIA to fight against the Lao revolutionary forces that are now in power.

The West has generally assigned all the tribulations and suffering of Indochina to the evils of Communism, without, however, suggesting some different and more humane way to deal with problems of the sort that the West has never faced. Or to mention a still more significant lapse, while the West sanctimoniously deplores the failure of the people of Indochina to solve the problems and overcome the suffering that are in large measure a result of Western intervention, it feels no compulsion to offer assistance, either guided by the humanitarianism that is constantly preached or as reparations. Occasionally, one finds some recognition of this failure. Thus the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, while denouncing the “cynical policies” that have created a “loathsome” society in Communist Vietnam, adds, parenthetically, that “if the blame is to be traced further back to its source—Vietnam’s switch to doctrinaire socialism and its economic crisis (and thus its present dependence on Moscow) are attributable to those countries who have denied

any aid or other encouragement to the increasingly desperate appeals of the now-defeated moderates.”³ He does not name these countries, but primary among them is the United States, which has refused aid and sought to block it from other sources, and has even rejected normal trade relations while rebuffing all Vietnamese efforts at normalization.

The editor’s formulation betrays a certain naiveté, typical of Western journalism and scholarship. He does not consider the background in policy for this denial of aid and encouragement. A major thrust of U.S. policy has been to create harsh conditions for its victims struggling to rebuild viable societies, transferring to them the blame for their distress even when this is very directly related to imperial violence. This is the fate that a country in the U.S. sphere must endure if it successfully exits from the Free World and tries to use its resources for its own purposes rather than adopting the dependency model favored by the privileged in the industrial societies. The policy of imposing hardship was followed in the case of China and Cuba, and is now being implemented once again to punish Indochina. While extremely ugly, the policy is rational enough from the standpoint of the leadership of the Free World.

Two interesting contrasts come to mind. After World War II, Germany and Japan were given substantial aid, although they were aggressor nations, with many of their leaders tried and executed for this crime, rather than victims of an unprovoked foreign attack. They were, however, under U.S. control. The aid flowed because of their reintegration into the Free World and serviceability to U.S. interests. A second contrast is between Indochina and, say Indonesia or Paraguay. As discussed in Volume I, these and other countries in the U.S. sphere are major human rights violators, but although Human Rights is the “Soul of our foreign policy,”⁴ these states are not only recognized by the United States and trade freely with it, but they are also recipients of aid and special financial privileges. They only abuse their own citizens or the victims of their aggression, while carefully protecting the rights and privileges of substantial foreign interests. They have the “property rights” priorities that have *real significance* in explaining the “human rights” pretense discussed in Volume I. The contrast to U.S. Indochina policy could hardly be more dramatic.

The media response to the travail of the people of Indochina is discussed at length in this volume. The Free Press has fulfilled its primary obligations to the state by averting Western eyes from the carnage of the war and effacing U.S. responsibility. As noted, all problems are attributed to the evils of Communism. The propaganda barrage has not only been highly selective, but has also involved substantial falsification. All in all, the performance of the Free Press in helping to reconstruct a badly mauled imperial ideology

has been eminently satisfactory. The only casualties have been truth, decency and the prospects for a more humane world.

While all of the countries of Indochina have been subjected to endless denunciations in the West for their “loathsome” qualities and unaccountable failure to find humane solutions to their problems, Cambodia was a particular target of abuse. In fact, it became virtually a matter of dogma in the West that the regime was the very incarnation of evil with no redeeming qualities, and that the handful of demonic creatures who had somehow taken over the country were systematically massacring and starving the population. How the “nine men at the center” were able to achieve this feat or why they chose to pursue the strange course of “autogenocide” were questions that were rarely pursued. Evidence suggesting popular support for the regime among certain strata—particularly the poorer peasants—was ignored or dismissed with revulsion and contempt. The fact that peasants in cooperatives were reported to work a 9-hour day, sometimes more, evoked outrage and horror on the part of commentators who seem to find no difficulty in coming to terms with the far more onerous conditions of labor, often near-slavery, that are common within the U.S. sphere of influence, such as those of Iranian slum-dwellers or Latin American Indians described in Volume I. At the same time, any scrap of evidence that would contribute to the desired image was eagerly seized (and regularly amplified), no matter how unreliable the source. Ordinary critical examination of sources, indeed, any effort to discover the truth, was regarded as a serious moral lapse. Furthermore, there was substantial fabrication of evidence. We will review these matters in detail in chapter 6.

There has been remarkably little serious effort to try to determine or comprehend what really happened in Cambodia during the period we are considering, although a few serious scholars concerned with Cambodia have, as we shall see, tried in vain to bring a measure of sanity and understanding to the discussion. Some have also warned of the consequences of the hysteria that was being whipped up in the West. Charles Meyer, a conservative French specialist on Cambodia, who was close to Prince Sihanouk for many years, warned that the accusations against the regime in Cambodia might “become the pretext of a Vietnamese invasion for a pretended liberation of the Khmer people.”⁵ He urged a more rational stance, with an attempt to evaluate evidence and to consider the historical and cultural context. His advice and warning were ignored. Those who failed to heed such warnings by Meyer and others, preferring to join in the international hysteria whatever the facts, undoubtedly contributed to exactly the consequence Meyer feared.

Some well-informed observers give considerable weight to this factor. Nayan Chanda,

analyzing the background for the Vietnamese invasion, suggests that of the many factors involved the most crucial may have been “Hanoi’s feeling that politically it was this dry season or never,” since the “international image” of Cambodia was slowly changing: “Some observers are convinced that had the Cambodian regime got a year’s reprieve, its internal and international image would have been improved enough to make any Vietnamese drive difficult if not impossible.”⁶ But relying on the international image that had been created as of late 1978, Vietnam could still assume that it would escape serious censure. As the London *Economist* observed: “If Vietnam believed that, because the Cambodia regime was almost universally condemned, criticism of the invasion would be muted, its belief was correct.” The *Economist* then indicated that it shared this attitude.⁷ Whether peasants of Cambodia share it as well is another question, but one which is naturally of little concern to the West.

When the fall of Phnom Penh was imminent, the Pol Pot regime dispatched Sihanouk to present its case at the United Nations. Sihanouk had been kept under house arrest by the regime and obviously had little use for its leadership; nor they for him, given the long history of bitter struggle prior to the Lon Nol coup of 1970 as Sihanouk’s government sought to destroy them while suppressing the peasant rebellions with violence and brutality. Nevertheless, Sihanouk declared his loyalty to that government and condemned the Vietnamese-imposed regime as mere puppets:

I did not participate in [the Pol Pot] government. I was virtually their prisoner for three years and now I must come and represent them. I am a patriot. They are patriots...They are courageous fighters, I cannot say for freedom but for national independence.⁸

While under house arrest, Sihanouk obviously had little opportunity to observe what was happening in the country. Nevertheless, his reactions are of some interest. He presented a dual picture: on the one hand, oppression, regimentation and terror; on the other, constructive achievements for much of the population. As for the latter, he informed the press in Peking that:

When Pol Pot organized the working people, it was good. The progress in agriculture was tremendous and in industry it was good...I do not make propaganda for Pol Pot, he is not my friend. But I do not want to criticize without justification.⁹

Sihanouk reported that he was taken 5 or 6 times on trips through the countryside:

[The people] work very hard, but they are not unhappy. On the contrary, they smile. On their lips we could hear songs, revolutionary songs naturally, not love songs. I prefer love songs. I was a crooner, I composed many love songs, but the revolutionary songs are not so bad. And the children, they played. They had no toys but they could run, they could laugh. They could eat bananas, which they had in the gardens of the cooperatives, and the food of the cooperatives was not bad, naturally not as good as my food in Phnom Penh, but good...They are not fat like me, but they are not skinny.¹⁰

Suppose there was a reign of terror. How could they laugh? How could they sing? How could they be so

very gay?...It seems that they are not terrorized. If the regime forced them to smile, we would see immediately that [the] smile is not natural, but I know my people well and the smile is quite natural.¹¹

Speaking before the United Nations, Sihanouk described Democratic Kampuchea as a nation “in full economic upswing, possessing vast rice paddies ever more admirably and fully irrigated and innumerable fields where fruit trees, maize, sugar cane, all kinds of vegetables and other crops grow in great profusion ...” Discounting for rhetorical excesses in the context of an attempt to construct a case against the Vietnamese invasion, and noting the limitations on his information, still it is noteworthy that Sihanouk was offering a positive picture of the achievements of the regime he despised, rather than, for example, seeking to associate himself with the Cambodian group placed in power in Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese army, as he might have done once he had left China, or simply dissociating himself at once from the conflict.

Sihanouk balanced this positive account with critical comment. He qualified his remarks in Peking by adding that he was speaking only about “basic rights” in praising the regime: “we are not animals like oxen and buffalo which work in the fields making rice. Yes, we make rice too, but we are not just animals.”¹² He also objected to restrictions on free practice of religion and “the right to travel very freely, not to be confined to the cooperatives, to be able to go to France for vacation, to roam freely...And the right to love and be loved, the right to choose your wife and be with your wife and children all the time, and not be separated.”¹³ At the United Nations he expanded on the “subject of violations of human rights by Pol Pot,” describing his suffering under confinement despite the privileges afforded him and his loss of contact with his children and grandchildren, whose fate he does not know.¹⁴ Sihanouk’s children by his present wife were allowed to stay with him, “but his two daughters by a previous marriage were married and had to accompany their husbands to the countryside”; “He was unable to protect them from the draft of workers for the rural cooperatives.”¹⁵ That is, they became peasants, as did virtually everyone in Cambodia. Sihanouk also reported that he had heard stories of terrible atrocities over BBC and Voice of America, but naturally was unable to verify these accounts, which he said he hoped were not true.

Though Sihanouk’s evidence was very limited, what information is now available—and it is neither extensive nor very reliable for the most part—indicates that his dual picture may well be accurate, as we shall see when we review the evidence in detail. The positive side of his picture has been virtually censored out of the Western media, at least until the visit by two U.S. journalists in December 1978. The negative side, much of which Sihanouk heard on the foreign radio, has been presented to a mass audience in a barrage

with few historical parallels, apart from wartime propaganda. It may well be that elements of both pictures are accurate. As for the negative side there can be little doubt that the war was followed by an outbreak of violence, massacre and repression, and it seems that bloody purges continued throughout the period under review. It is also beyond question that the entire population was compelled to share the lives of the poorer peasants. The first of these consequences is an atrocity by anyone's standards, though, as we shall see, there are unanswered questions as to its character, scale, and locus of responsibility. The second is an atrocity by Western standards, though it is worth noting that the peasants may not regard it as an atrocity if others are compelled to live as they do, just as it is unclear how much they miss the opportunity to have vacations in France.

It is quite important to stress, in this connection, that while the West is appalled that privileged urban elements are compelled to live the life of peasants, it does not regard peasant life in itself as an atrocity. Rather, this is the normal state of affairs. It is not regarded as a continuing atrocity, for example, that "malnutrition is 'a chronic condition that seems to many to be getting worse' in areas like South Asia, stunting millions of lives by retarding physical and mental development, and indirectly causing millions of deaths."¹⁶ While Western scorn and ire are focused on Indochina and its continuing misery, we hear little condemnation of neighboring Thailand, a potentially rich country that has suffered neither colonialism nor war—in fact, "for over a decade, Thailand's economy had experienced an artificial boom, due mainly to American military spending which accounted for half the growth of gross national product in the 1960s."¹⁷ A confidential report of the World Bank gives a "damning indictment" of the policies of the ruling elite that have left nine million people—a third of the population—in "absolute poverty, while real incomes particularly in the north and northeast, have stagnated or declined." The report "may finally bury any vestiges of official optimism" on the situation in rural areas, where poverty is increasing to near starvation levels among rice farmers, while incomes of unskilled rural workers, a rapidly expanding group as Thai agriculture becomes commercialized, "are as low as those of subsistence rice farmers of the northeast." And as a further "price of 'modernisation,' in 1973 there were 400,000 drug addicts, 300,000 prostitutes, and 55,000 children under five who died of malnutrition." The World Bank study also explains the social structure and relations of power that lead inexorably to these consequences.¹⁸

As we have discussed in Volume I, these conditions, now extended over a large part of the Third World, are the direct result of U.S. intervention over many decades. It is an

important part of Western ideological self-protection to present these effects as unexplained natural phenomena, not atrocities. Thus, no condemnation is leveled at the Thai elite for creating this situation and maintaining it by force. Nor has the United States become an international pariah because of its direct responsibility for the worsening conditions of the millions of peasants who are suffering in this relatively favored country.

It is hardly to be expected that peasants in Southeast Asia or elsewhere will be much impressed by the discriminating judgments of Western moralists. It is perhaps more likely that they would be impressed by the positive side of the developments in Cambodia described by Sihanouk.

The conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia, which entered a new phase in January 1979, had its roots in historical antagonisms exacerbated by imperial conquest. Although there were periods of cooperation in the war against French and later U.S. aggression, the relations between the Vietnamese Communists and the Cambodian revolutionaries were frequently strained and often bitter.¹⁹ In the post-1975 period, the border conflict became the focus of these antagonisms, though the dispute ran far deeper. As Heder points out, “behind the current conflict between Kampuchea and Vietnam and their governing communist parties lie differences so profound that each revolution stands as an implicit critique of the other.” With regard to the border issue, Heder points out that it

is at once secondary and crucial to the conflict. It is secondary, because it is only a symptom of wider disagreements and because only a relatively small area is in dispute, despite the propaganda charges made at times by both sides. It is crucial, however, because of its role as a barometer for the Kampuchians. The government uses it to gauge Vietnamese attitudes, and the population employs it to measure the regime’s nationalist credentials.

From the Cambodian point of view, the border conflict raises “intense fear of racial and national extinction...Although the Kampuchians may have fired the first shots, they considered their action a response to *de facto* Vietnamese aggression by long-term occupation of Kampuchean land.”²⁰

For the Vietnamese, Cambodian incursions had been a serious irritant since 1975, causing destruction and death, and sometimes massacre of civilians, and hampering projects of economic development. The problem became far more severe as the simmering conflict with China, which was easily detectable years earlier,²¹ grew to significant proportions. This conflict, combined with the closing off of other options by the United States as described above, compelled the Vietnamese to ally more closely with the Soviet Union, while Cambodia allied itself with China. Thus the local conflict was further embittered as it gained an international dimension.²² The U.S.-China agreements must

have further increased Vietnamese concern over the unsettled and often bloody border conflict. Ideological differences no doubt also played a role, as did the very different character and process of the social revolution in the two countries.

A limited Vietnamese invasion was beaten back in December 1977. The full-scale invasion of December 1978 was successful in conquering the roads and towns of Cambodia and imposing a pro-Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh. Apart from that, its prospects and consequences seem quite unclear.

The 1978-79 invasion began, as had been predicted, with the advent of the dry season in December. U.S.-government sources reported on December 2 that “a full-scale dry season offensive by Vietnamese troops has shattered a Cambodian Army division in the worst setback the Phnom Penh Government has suffered in the 18-month-old conflict.”²³ On the same day, a drive to establish a “liberated zone” was announced in Hanoi, in the name of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) consisting of Cambodian refugees organized and trained by Vietnam.²⁴ Shortly after, Cambodian Premier Pol Pot announced a policy of “protracted war” in the face of the overwhelming military superiority of the Vietnamese.²⁵ An all-out invasion took place on December 25, and according to Western sources, succeeded in entrapping almost half of Cambodia’s 30,000-man army, who were “believed to have been decimated by a concentration of artillery fire and aerial bombing.”²⁶ A 100,000-man Vietnamese force backed by 15-20,000 KNUFNS troops and equipped with aircraft, tanks and other advanced weaponry proceeded to take military objectives throughout Cambodia, as the Cambodian forces retreated into the jungle, where preparations had begun months earlier, under Chinese guidance, “for a long-drawn-out guerrilla resistance.”²⁷

Credible evidence is so sparse that it is difficult to assess the prospects for this guerrilla resistance. As we write (early February, 1979), Western analysts are reporting substantial successes for guerrilla forces throughout much of the country, with the Vietnamese troops controlling the towns and roads and the Pol Pot forces moving freely in much of the countryside.²⁸ It is clear that the Vietnamese do not believe that the regime they have placed in power in Phnom Penh can control the situation. They have not withdrawn any forces, and in fact may have supplemented them.

According to the approved version in the Soviet Union and the West, the Cambodian people who have been groaning under their persecution should have welcomed the KNUFNS as liberators and turned on the handful of oppressors who had been subjecting them to systematic programs of massacre and starvation. Apparently, that did not happen.

In a lame attempt to deal with their problem, some commentators point out that “although the Cambodian army is fighting fiercely, the farmers in the countryside are not resisting the advancing Vietnamese and rebel troops.”²⁹ This is supposed to show that the farmers did not support the Pol Pot regime. Perhaps they did not, but this will hardly serve as evidence, unless the same commentators are willing to conclude that French farmers did not support their government in 1940—not to mention the fact that France was not outnumbered seven to one by Germany (or ten to one, if we believe the accounts of systematic massacre circulated in the Soviet bloc and the West) nor was it vastly inferior in armaments. Exactly how farmers are to “resist” armored columns remains unexplained as well.

Some commentators, apparently troubled by the failure of the population to turn against their genocidal leaders and to rally to the support of the new Cambodian regime that has liberated them from their torture, have sought other explanations. Henry Kamm, one of the major proponents of the theory of “auto-genocide,” writes that “fear of revenge is believed to be inhibiting the growth of widespread popular support for the Vietnamese and the new Cambodian regime of President Heng Samrin that has been installed in Phnom Penh,” a fact that will require Vietnam “to commit major forces indefinitely to prop up the Heng Samrin Government.”³⁰ How the “nine men in the center” are to exact this revenge, given the assumption that the population subjected to their genocidal programs opposed them with near unanimity, Kamm does not explain.³¹ In fact, the historical precedent is for a conquered population to accommodate quickly and without great difficulty to the rule of a foreign enemy or of imposed Quislings, as in France during World War II. Surely one would have expected an overwhelming and joyous welcome for the Heng Samrin regime by virtually the entire population if the version of recent history that Kamm and his colleagues in the Free Press have been propounding had any merit. The limited evidence currently available suggests a rather different picture.

The Cambodian resistance to the Vietnamese invasion of December-January lends credence to the dual picture described by Sihanouk. The Vietnamese invasion can be explained, but it cannot be justified. What its consequences will be, one can only guess. It may succeed in establishing in power a friendly regime that will be accepted by the population, or it may lead to the virtual extinction of Khmer nationalism, or it may set the stage for a long and bloody war, with agonizing consequences for the tormented people of Indochina and serious implications beyond.

The United Nations Security Council debate was a depressing scene. The *New York*

Times reported an “anomalous air of jollity,” quoting a diplomat who was enjoying the “wit and restraint” and who commented that “perhaps the world has grown up a little since those days” when the atmosphere was one of “grim tension.”³² To appreciate the “anomaly,” one must bear in mind that the delegates taking part in the jollity accepted Sihanouk’s analysis that the Vietnamese invasion was comparable to the Nazi invasion of France.

It is an open question whether the consolidation of nation-states in Indochina will proceed at anything like the level of barbarism and violence that characterized the same process in Europe or the United States over the past several centuries. Given the major and continuing Western role in contributing to misery in Indochina, the barely concealed pleasure over continuing tragedy is as contemptible as the deep hypocrisy of typical Western commentary.

The Setting

1.1 The U.S. Impact on Indochina

The U.S. war in Indochina began as one of innumerable examples of counterrevolutionary intervention throughout the world. As a result of the wholly unanticipated level of resistance of the Vietnamese revolutionaries, and later their allies when the United States spread the war to the rest of Indochina, it was gradually transformed into one of the most destructive and murderous attacks on a civilian population in history, as the world's most powerful military machine was unleashed against peasant societies with extremely limited means of self-defense and lacking the capacity to strike back at the source of aggression.

The main outlines of the U.S. war are well documented. After World War II, the United States determined to back French imperialism in its effort to destroy what planners clearly recognized to be an indigenous nationalist movement in Vietnam, which declared independence in 1945 and vainly sought recognition and aid from the United States. The French-U.S. repacification effort failed. In 1954, France accepted a political settlement at Geneva, which, if adhered to by the United States, would have led to independence for the three countries of Indochina. Unwilling to accept the terms of this settlement, the United States undertook at once to subvert them. A client regime was established in South Vietnam which immediately rejected the basic framework of the agreements, launched a fierce repression in the South, and refused to permit the elections to unify the two administrative zones of the country as laid down in the Geneva Accords (see Volume I, chapter 5). In the 1950s, the United States still hoped to be able to reconquer all of Vietnam; later, it limited its aims to maintaining control over South Vietnam and incorporating it into the Free World by any necessary means. Direct involvement of U.S. armed forces in military action against the South Vietnamese began in 1961-62.

Meanwhile in Laos the United States also successfully undermined the Geneva political settlement and prevented any sharing of power by the Pathet Lao, the left wing resistance forces that had fought the French and won the 1958 election despite a major U.S. effort to prevent this outcome. The United States then turned to subversion and fraud, setting off a civil war in which, as in South Vietnam, the right wing military backed by the United States was unable to hold its own. Meanwhile, Cambodia was able to maintain independence despite continual harassment by U.S. clients in Thailand and South Vietnam and an unsuccessful effort at subversion in the late 1950s.

By the early 1960s, virtually all parties concerned, apart from the United States and its various local clients, were making serious efforts to avoid an impending war by neutralizing South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; that is, removing them from external (overwhelmingly U.S.) influence and control. Such an outcome was anathema to the U.S. leadership. President Johnson informed Ambassador Lodge in 1964 that his mission was “knocking down the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head.” The United States was deeply concerned to prevent any negotiated political settlement because, as is easily documented, its planners and leaders assumed that the groups that they backed could not possibly survive peaceful competition.

Once again the United States succeeded in preventing a peaceful settlement. In South Vietnam, it stood in opposition to all significant political forces, however anti-Communist, imposing the rule of a military clique that was willing to serve U.S. interests. By January 1965, the United States was compelled to undermine its own puppet, General Khanh; he was attempting to form what Ambassador Taylor called a “dangerous” coalition with the Buddhists, who were not acting “in the interests of the Nation,” as General Westmoreland explained. What is more, Khanh was apparently trying to make peace with the NLF, quite possibly a factor that lay behind the elimination of his predecessors. At that point, the United States, which stood alone in understanding “the interests of the Nation” in South Vietnam, had no alternative but to extend its already substantial military campaign against the rural society of the South, where the overwhelming majority of the population lived. The United States therefore launched a full-scale invasion in a final effort to destroy the organized popular forces in the South. The invasion was accompanied by the bombing of North Vietnam, undertaken to lay some basis for the claim that the United States was “defending the South against external aggression,” and in the hope that the DRV would use its influence to bring the southern rebellion to a halt and permit the United States to attain its goals. This maneuver failed. The DRV responded by sending limited forces to the South, as most U.S. planners had anticipated. Meanwhile, the United States began the systematic bombing of South Vietnam, at three times the level of the more publicized—and more protested—bombing of the North.

The war also intensified in Laos, with U.S. bombing from 1964 and military operations by a “clandestine army” of Hmong tribesmen, organized and directed by the CIA to supplement the inept “official” army trained and armed by the U.S. military. U.S. outposts in northern Laos were guiding the bombing of North Vietnam from Thai bases. By this time Thai and North Vietnamese forces were also engaged, though on a considerably smaller scale. By 1968, the United States was conducting a bombing campaign of

extraordinary severity in northern Laos, far removed from the war in South Vietnam. By 1969 the sporadic U.S.-Saigon attacks on Cambodia had escalated to intensive bombardment, and after the coup of March, 1970, which overthrew the Sihanouk government, Cambodia too was plunged into the inferno. U.S.-Saigon military actions began two days after the coup and a full-scale invasion (called a “limited incursion”) took place at the end of April—“limited,” as it turned out, largely because of the unprecedented demonstration of protest in the United States. This invasion and the subsequent bombing, particularly in 1973, led to vast suffering and destruction throughout the country.

All of these efforts failed. In January 1973 the United States signed a peace treaty in Paris which virtually recapitulated the NLF program of the early 1960s. This was interpreted as a stunning diplomatic victory in the United States. The United States government announced at once that it would disregard every essential provision of this treaty, and proceeded to do so, attempting again to conquer South Vietnam, now through the medium of the vastly expanded military forces it organized, trained, advised, and supplied. In a most remarkable display of servility, the Free Press misrepresented the new agreement in accordance with the Kissinger-Nixon version, which was diametrically opposed to the text on every crucial point, thus failing to bring out the significance of the U.S.-Thieu subversion of the major elements of the agreement. This misrepresentation of the actual terms of the agreement set the stage for indignation at the North Vietnamese response and the sudden collapse of the puppet regime.¹

All of these U.S. efforts dating back to the 1940s eventually failed. By April 1975, U.S. clients had been defeated in all parts of Indochina, leaving incredible carnage, bitterness, and near insoluble problems of reconstruction. The United States thereafter refused reparations or aid, and exerted its considerable influence to block assistance from elsewhere. Even trade is blocked by the United States, in a striking display of malice.²

Historical comparisons are of only limited value—too many factors vary from case to case—but it nevertheless may be suggestive to compare the situation in Indochina after 1975 with that of Western Europe as World War II came to an end. Western Europe was, of course, a group of advanced industrial countries which had, furthermore, suffered much less damage than the peasant societies brutalized by the United States in Indochina. Nevertheless, substantial U.S. assistance was provided to reconstruct industrial capitalism and to tame the labor movement and the popular resistance forces.³ The harsh winters of the early postwar years brought Great Britain almost to its knees, and years went by before the effects of the war in Western Europe were overcome. The early years were marked by

brutal massacres, forced labor and “reeducation” for prisoners of war, and other measures of retribution. (See chapter 2, section 2.)

In Indochina, the problems of reconstruction after 1975 were incomparably more severe. The destruction of the land and the social structure far surpassed anything in the industrial democracies subjected to Nazi attack and occupation. There are still no reparations or aid from the United States, and only very limited assistance from elsewhere. The most severe natural catastrophes in many decades have caused further havoc, as have conflicts of an extremely serious nature between Vietnam and Cambodia, and Vietnam and China. These conflicts the United States regards with satisfaction. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown explained in an address to the Trilateral Commission (composed of elite groups in the United States, Japan, and Western Europe), the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict “does take the pressure off ASEAN [the U.S. Southeast Asian allies]” while in the long run the “Vietnamese attempts at minor league hegemonism is [sic] likely to preoccupy the Communist powers in Southeast Asia for some time to come.”⁴ These conflicts are also helpful to U.S. policy by further impeding the difficult tasks of reconstruction and creating still more destruction in the lands ravaged by the U.S. military machine.

Vast social changes are imperative in Indochina to overcome centuries of injustice and oppression exacerbated by French colonialism, with its brutal and destructive impact on the peasant society, little recognized or appreciated in the West. Still more urgent, even a matter of sheer survival, is the need to return to the countryside the millions of people driven into urban concentrations by U.S. violence. The artificial Western implantations which survived on a foreign dole must be dismantled, and quickly, if the population is to survive. On this matter, all competent authorities agree. It is difficult to imagine how the task might be accomplished without considerable further suffering and disruption under the best of circumstances. Certainly, the far wealthier Western societies, which had suffered much less from World War II, would have had great difficulty in dealing with their far more limited problems without enormous foreign assistance, and would no doubt have been compelled to resort to Draconian measures.

It is worth noting that despite their enormous wealth and advantage, the Western powers have never conceived of undertaking serious programs directed to the welfare of the impoverished majority in the underdeveloped countries under their domination and influence, and would have no idea how to proceed even if, in some stunning reversal of history, they were to devote themselves to these ends. While Western elites are always keen to denounce injustice beyond their reach—from their position of privilege that

derives from centuries of brutal exploitation—the task of overcoming degradation and poverty within their own realms merits nothing more than occasional rhetorical flights, and they have demonstrated their talents and concern primarily in devising new forms of brutality and oppression when their own interests are threatened.

Under existing conditions, it is not clear that the tasks facing the postwar regimes in Indochina can be accomplished at all. By the standards of Western European or U.S. history, one should expect brutality, oppression, and recurrent warfare as these problems are confronted.

While the countries of Indochina face their perhaps insuperable tasks, the United States and its allies have tasks as well. One is to reconstruct recent history so as to present their past role in a better light. A second is to ensure that the countries that have freed themselves from Western dominion face harsh and severe conditions. The reasons are primarily two: to teach the lesson that exit from the Free World in the interest of national autonomy is the worst fate that a subject people can endure, and to provide a *post hoc* justification for U.S. intervention by showing the awful consequences of its defeat. It is obvious that the most severe consequences have followed directly from the original U.S. intervention. It is beyond question that Indochina would be a far happier place if the United States had refrained from backing the French imperial conquest, or had been willing to accept the political settlement of 1954, the neutralization proposals advanced by everyone from de Gaulle to the NLF in 1962-64, or the Paris Accords of 1973. It is both irrational and deeply immoral for the propaganda systems of the West to pretend that Western sensibilities are shocked by postwar atrocities and suffering, a transparent effort to efface its own record of barbarism—primarily, though not solely, that of the leader of the Free World. But total irrationality has never offered much of an impediment to propagandists in the past, and as we shall see, it is no more of a problem in the present case. As usual, a fair degree of fabrication and deceit also comes in handy. Given the monolithic character of the media and scholarship, which tolerate little dissent, these efforts have achieved extraordinary success.

We will now turn to a more detailed discussion of some particular aspects of this amazing story and will see how these various themes run their predictable course in connection with each of the countries of Indochina, observing how the West is proceeding to come to terms with its crimes. In the course of this discussion, we will also consider some relevant background.

1.2 The United States in Vietnam: A Partial Victory

The war in Vietnam ended with a defeat for U.S. imperial violence, but only a partial defeat—a significant fact. The U.S. Expeditionary Force of over half a million men in South Vietnam became “a drugged, mutinous and demoralised rabble”⁵ and was withdrawn. U.S. leaders had painfully learned a lesson familiar to their predecessors: a conscript army is ill-suited to fight a colonial war with its inevitable barbarism and incessant atrocities against helpless civilians. Such a war is better left to hired killers such as the French Foreign Legion or native mercenaries, or in the modern period to an advanced technology that leaves some psychic distance between the murderers and their victims—although even B-52 pilots reportedly began to object when Nixon and Kissinger dispatched them to devastate Hanoi in December, 1972 in a final effort to compel the North Vietnamese to accept a U.S.-dictated peace.⁶

The United States was never able to construct a viable Quisling government or organize local forces capable of maintaining the U.S. creation against its Vietnamese enemies. As Richard West remarks, “when the Communists launched their attack in March 1975 they were still outnumbered by more than three to one in manpower and still more in equipment, in spite of the claims to the contrary issued from Saigon,” but “the South”—that is, the U.S. client regime and its supporters—had “simply lost the will to go on fighting.” Historian Joseph Buttinger comments that its “swift and dramatic collapse...was not the result of an overwhelming attack by superior military forces” and “came about because of the degree of moral disintegration the South Vietnamese army had reached in 1975” which “in turn reflected the degree of moral and political decay to which South Vietnamese society had sunk after years of increasing political terror, mass misery and corruption”⁷—that is, after years of U.S. “nation-building” efforts. As seen by T.D. Allman, one of the most outstanding of the war correspondents for many years, the U.S. policy of refugee generation created

what Senator Fulbright called “a society of prostitutes and mercenaries”—and the caricature of civilisation produced in South Vietnam by the American way of war is what now accounts for the collapse of a state that never had any economic, political or social basis except that provided by the Americans. The South Vietnamese soldiers fleeing an enemy which has not yet attacked and trying to push their motor bikes on to U.S. ships sum up the product of American “nation-building”—a militarist society with nothing worth fighting for; a consumer society that produces nothing; a nation of abandoned women conditioned to flee to the next handout of US surplus rice; of dispossessed gangs hitching rides on US planes to the next jerry-built urban slum.⁸

The speed and character of the collapse of the Saigon regime came as a surprise even to the usually well-informed leadership in Hanoi, and even more so to Washington, where it had been “optimistically” proclaimed not long before that the regime that the United States continued to support in violation of the scrap of paper signed in Paris in January,

1973 was successfully eliminating the parallel and equivalent authority in the South (the PRG) with which it was pledged to accommodate, and would be able to withstand any military response to its program of undermining the Paris Accords by force and violence.⁹

But the U.S. defeat was only partial. To understand events in postwar Vietnam it is important to recognize that the United States did in effect win the war in the South. It did not quite succeed in realizing the grim prediction of Bernard Fall that “Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity...is threatened with extinction” as “the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size.”¹⁰ But it came close. As the full power of the U.S. expeditionary force was let loose against the South in the following years, there was substantial success in “grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass” in the accurate words of pacification chief Robert (“Blowtorch”) Komer.¹¹

The southern-based indigenous resistance, which had called for the independence and neutrality of South Vietnam at a time when the U.S. client regime (and its sponsor) firmly rejected any such outcome, was virtually destroyed, as was the peasant society in which it had taken hold. Hence both the military and political phases of the struggle fell under the control of North Vietnam, viciously attacked, with a large part of its above-ground physical structures destroyed, but never crushed as a viable society. Frank Snepp, one of the top CIA analysts of Vietnamese affairs in the latter years of the war, writes: “At the time of the Communist victory the party apparatus in the south was in shambles, thanks in part to the depredations of the Phoenix Program. The [North Vietnamese] army thus remained the primary instrument of control.”¹² This consequence of the U.S. war provided a propaganda victory for Western hypocrites, who could now maintain on the basis of the direct results of the U.S. assault that the United States was obviously now “defending South Vietnam from aggression from Hanoi.”

The propaganda institutions have, needless to say, lost no time in exploiting their advantage. To select one of numerous examples, the *New York Times*, in an editorial concerned with what is “to be learned now from Indochina,” writes: “In Vietnam, clearly, North has vanquished South. The National Liberation Front that we would not admit to political power has been destroyed more surely by Hanoi than Washington ever dreamed it could be.”¹³ A marvel of hypocrisy since, as we described earlier, Washington didn’t merely “dream” but effectively killed the NLF “fish” by the deliberate process of “drying up the water” (i.e., destroying the peasant society of South Vietnam); but consistent with a long tradition of apologetics the *Times* editorial conveniently ignores the background of

the alleged takeover.¹⁴

A second aspect of the partial U.S. victory in Vietnam is that most of the country, along with Laos and Cambodia, lies in ruins, so that a colossal task of reconstruction faces the survivors. The sight continues to amaze even experienced war correspondents. John Pilger, who reported for ten years from Vietnam, writes after a recent visit that “much of North Vietnam is a moonscape from which visible signs of life—houses, factories, schools, hospitals, pagodas, churches—have been obliterated. In some forests there are no longer birds and animals; and there are lorry drivers who will not respond to the hooting of a horn because they are deaf from the incessant sound of bombs.” Vietnamese authorities report 30,000 cases of permanent deafness among children from the 1972 bombings alone, Pilger reports. He describes napalm, especially created for Vietnam, that “continues to smoulder under the skin’s tissues through the lifetime of its victims”; areas bombed more heavily than Dresden; cities, such as Vinh, bombed so heavily that not even the foundations of buildings remain, and where now people live on the edge of famine, with rice rations lower than Bangladesh.¹⁵ These consequences of the U.S. war are also regularly exploited by Western commentators who point to the extraordinary difficulties in reconstructing some kind of existence from the wreckage as proof of Communist iniquity.

These partial victories are important. To preserve the image of U.S. benevolence, always a crucial element in imperial ideology, it is necessary to preserve in the popular mind the Big Lie that the United States was indeed engaged in “defense against aggression,” as was constantly proclaimed by Dean Rusk, Arthur Schlesinger, and other propagandists.¹⁶ As noted, the dominant role of the North in the final stages of the war and after—a direct result of the U.S. success in demolishing the South—contributes to the preservation of this myth and is regularly exploited to this end by journalists and scholars.¹⁷

There was an equally important benefit flowing from the devastation. Internal documents reveal that a major concern of U.S. planners has always been the “demonstration effect” of potential Communist success, which might serve as a model for nationalist movements elsewhere in Western-dominated regions. The primary U.S. goal in the Third World is to ensure that it remains open to U.S. economic penetration and political control. Failing this the United States exerts every effort to ensure that societies that try to strike an independent course—specifically, those that are called “Communist” in contemporary political jargon—will suffer the harshest conditions that U.S. power can impose so as to keep “the rot from spreading” by “ideological successes,” in the

terminology employed by U.S. global planners.¹⁸ Though the United States was unable to subdue the nationalist movements of Indochina, it has attained its secondary goal. In addition to the immense problems of underdevelopment that burden the former Western colonies, the countries of Indochina must somehow confront the task of overcoming the ravages of the U.S. war-without reparations or aid from the United States, and indeed in the face of continued U.S. opposition even to aid from elsewhere.¹⁹

Now that the countries of Indochina have been pounded to dust, Western ideologists are less fearful of the demonstration effect of successful Communism and exult in the current willingness of the Western satellites of ASEAN to engage in “peaceful competition.” In the *London Observer* Gavin Young reports on ASEAN’s program of obliterating Communism “not with bombs but with prosperity,” under the leadership of the smiling, humanitarian Marcos, Lee Kuan Yew, Suharto, Hussein Onn of Malaysia, and General Kriangsak of Thailand (with his “dark, puckish face, at once warm-hearted and mischievous”). These benevolent leaders understand the priorities (“slum clearance, rural poverty”) and are now firmly setting out to eradicate the ills of their societies, as Young discovered when he interviewed them on their golf courses.²⁰ No one without access to the golf courses is interviewed, nor is there any discussion of the conditions under which most of the population of these potentially wealthy countries live, or why this situation persists, or concerning the past and ongoing atrocities conducted by the genial golfers and their ASEAN colleagues under the Western aegis. Imagine what the reaction would be in the West to a featured article in the press explaining how wondrous Asian communism is becoming, based exclusively on interviews with Kim Il-Sung, Pol Pot, etc. The comparison, once again, is informative as to the true character of the Free Press. Equally informative is the fact that it does not occur to the author or editors to note that this willingness to “see which system works best” followed many years of “working to obliterate communism” with bombs, with an impact on the victims that has conveniently been forgotten by the Free Press.

The U.S. government also suffered a defeat at home, but again, only a partial defeat. In the 1960s, a mass popular movement developed, unprecedented in scale and commitment, opposing the U.S. war in Vietnam. Contrary to common beliefs, the articulate intelligentsia remained largely loyal to the state propaganda system and, with some exceptions, only rarely approached even the periphery of this popular movement. Their opposition to the war, which developed at about the same time and for the same reasons as opposition in business circles, was highly qualified and fundamentally unprincipled: the

United States simply could not get away with what it was doing at reasonable cost.²¹

Typical current assessments on the part of U.S. liberals run along these lines:

The American engagement in Vietnam continues to seem more bumbleheaded than evil; the progress of the war still appears to have been based upon a compendium of false analogies, bad guesses and self-righteousness. Much of this was termed evil at the time, but the name callers often created their own faulty analogies and exhibited notably self-righteous qualities...This assessment is made without regard to the “morality” of the American engagement...Johnson’s policy was not repudiated by [left or right wing] critics, but by the traditional logic of pragmatism: it did not work. The Tet offensive...provided the most dramatic evidence. No one could say for sure whether the Americans had won or lost at Tet, because no one was certain of the terms of victory and defeat. Such ambiguity sits poorly on the American psyche.²²

Note the quotes around the word “morality.” Only the acts of enemies of the state are to be assessed in moral terms. Note also the initial finding of an absence of “evil,” and the later revelation that “morality” is outside the terms of the discussion. Apart from the inane reference to the “American psyche,” Ross’ conclusion is accurate enough. “The logic of pragmatism” swayed not only Johnson, but also most of the liberal critics of the war.

To cite another example, consider the Op-Ed by Charles Peters, editor-in-chief of the liberal muckraking journal *Washington Monthly* in the *New York Times* (24 October 1977). He is concerned to “heal the terrible wound that [the war] left with us” by finding “some common ground” between the “left” and the “right,” both of whom must concede that they were in part wrong. The error of the right was “that the massive escalation in 1965 was wrong and that the effort to bomb the North Vietnamese into submission was stupid”; “we began to go wrong in 1965 with our campaign of mass slaughter against the Vietnamese. And we were wrong when we forced draftees to fight and die in what could at best be described as a morally ambiguous situation.” The slaughter of over 150,000 South Vietnamese by 1965, the U.S. bombing of villages, mass forced population removal, the institution and support for Diemist subfascist terror in an effort to overcome the “disaster” of the Geneva Accords, the earlier support for French imperialism against what was always understood to be the nationalist movement of Vietnam—all of this was before “we began to go wrong.” Furthermore, “We weren’t wrong to try to help the South [sic] with supplies and volunteers [sic], any more than the American left was wrong to give such help to the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War.”²³ This much is “common ground.”

Where was the “left” wrong? In that it “surely...must concede...that there was in fact a substantial part of the population who did not want to live under Communism. The left needs to overcome its racist tendency to say that while Europeans should have democracy, Communism is just dandy for those yellow people.”

A complete captive of the assumptions of the war propagandists, Peters is unable to

comprehend that opponents of the war were insisting that Vietnam should be left to the Vietnamese, not to whatever fate is determined for them by the likes of Walt Rostow, Henry Kissinger, or the myriad sycophants of the Peters variety. To regard that commitment as “racist” reveals moral standards that are quite on a par with the intellectual level indicated by Peters’ belief that opponents of the war must now “concede” that there were many anti-Communists in Vietnam, a great insight, no doubt. His implication that the United States was fighting for “democracy” for the yellow people in South Vietnam is ideological claptrap, refuted by the consistent U.S. support for terror regimes in South Vietnam (and indeed throughout the subfascist empire, as illustrated throughout Volume I).

We may compare Peters’ plea for healing the wounds of war with that of William Colby, as illustrated in this item which we quote *in toto* from the *Boston Globe* (15 January 1977):

Former CIA Director William Colby, who directed the ‘pacification’ program during the Vietnam war, said the United States and the Communist government of Vietnam should forget past animosities and build a relationship of respect and friendship. Both countries should ‘agree to consign the misdeeds of the past to the mists of history,’ Colby said.

In keeping with the same desire for reconciliation, it is natural that Henry Kissinger, who bears heavy responsibility for the Indochinese slaughter, should be honored with the Humanitarian Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (*Boston Globe*, 17 September 1977).

Other journalistic commentary is similar. At the war’s end, the liberal *Washington Post* warned that debate over the war must be balanced:

For if much of the actual conduct of Vietnam policy over the years was wrong and misguided—even tragic—it cannot be denied that some part of the purpose of that policy was right and defensible. Specifically, it was right to hope that the people of South Vietnam would be able to decide on their own form of government and social order. The American public is entitled, indeed obligated, to explore how good impulses came to be transmuted into bad policy, but we cannot afford to cast out all remembrance of that earlier impulse. For the fundamental “lesson” of Vietnam surely is...that we are capable of error—and on a gigantic scale. That is the spirit in which the post-mortems on Vietnam ought now to go forward. Not just the absence of recrimination, but also the presence of insight and honesty is required to bind up the nation’s wounds.²⁴

Note the typical assumption that “we” decided to undertake and pursue the Vietnam War. Note also the crucial words: “wrong,” “misguided,” “tragic,” “error.” That is as far as “insight and honesty” can carry us in reaching our judgment. The *Post*, incidentally, does not assign a date to that “early impulse” to help the people of South Vietnam “decide on their own form of government and social order,” a wise oversight on their part.

Similarly, the most outspoken dove on the *New York Times* in the latter stages of the

war, Anthony Lewis, sums up the history of the war as follows:

The early American decisions on Indochina can be regarded as blundering efforts to do good. But by 1969 it was clear to most of the world—and most Americans—that the intervention had been a disastrous mistake.

Our nation-building effort was “a delusion” and “no amount of arms or dollars or blood could ever make it work.” The lesson of Vietnam is that “deceit does not pay.” We should avoid mistakes and lies, keep to policies that succeed and are accurately portrayed; that is the lesson of Vietnam.²⁵

The regular commentator of the liberal *New Republic*, Richard Strout, also sees the war as “one of the greatest blunders of our history.” “It was not wickedness; it was stupidity.”²⁶ These conclusions he wrote from Paris, where he had been visiting monuments to Hitler’s crimes. The emotional impact was overwhelming: “I hated the maniac Hitler crew; I could never forgive the Germans.” But then he “thought of Vietnam,” reaching the conclusions just cited. The “maniac Hitler crew” were presumably not guilty merely of “blunders” and “stupidity.” Strout does not raise the question whether the cruelty of “maniacs” is more or less wicked than the cold-blooded decisions and rationally imposed terror of Washington politicians and military bureaucrats tabulating body counts and contracting for improved fragmentation bombs.

We wonder how Strout would react to looking at mile after mile of lunar craters, razed villages, and the graves of hundreds of thousands of permanently pacified peasants. The beauty of nationalism is that whatever the means your state employs, since the leadership always proclaims noble objectives, and a nationalist can swallow these, wickedness is ruled out and stupidity explains all despicable behavior. It is only for assorted enemies that we look closely at *real* objectives and apply the more serious observation that means are both important in themselves as measures of evil and are inseparably related to (and interactive with) ends.²⁷

Bertrand Russell was one of the few who sought to bring some understanding of this chapter in imperial violence into the public arena, unfortunately to little effect. In 1964 he criticized the editorial stand of the U.S. social democratic journal *Dissent*, which opposed U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam as “something quite as inhumane” as the policy of “hopeless attrition of the Vietnamese people.” Their reason was that withdrawal of U.S. forces would “almost certainly” be followed by “a slaughter in the South of all those who have fought against the Communists.”²⁸ The editors seemed oblivious to the likely consequence of a U.S.-Saigon victory, though the record of Diem’s murderous assault on the opposition (with U.S. backing) was well-known. Particularly revealing is the tacit

assumption that the United States has the authority to intervene to impose its concept of humanity. As the war ended the *Dissent* editors commented that the position they had taken was correct, though one might question “nuances.”²⁹ In particular, nothing in the intervening years led them to question the tacit assumption just noted. If the U.S. government is to be faulted, it is for the manner in which it has executed its mission. Russell’s warning and analysis went unheeded. On these crucial issues, the “democratic socialists” of *Dissent* adopt the fundamental assumptions of spokesmen for the U.S. imperial state. In 1978 they proceeded to run a symposium asking whether in the light of events in postwar Cambodia, we should rethink “our opposition” to the Vietnam War³⁰—we will not comment here on the astonishing assumptions that even permit that question to be raised.³¹

To cite one last example of a record that might extend to a full book in itself, consider the criticism of Gloria Emerson’s *Winners and Losers* by Homer Bigart, the highly-respected war correspondent of the *New York Times*, for her intolerance toward those who find Vietnam “less a moral crime than the thunderously stupid military blunder of throwing half a million ground troops into an unwinnable war.”³² Had the war been winnable or had there been less stupidity in fighting it, then the original U.S. aggression and the consequences for the victims would have been no “moral crime,” according to this again quite typical reaction by someone who is generally regarded as a critic of the war.

Throughout the war U.S. liberalism kept pretty much within the limits of responsible thinking, as defined by the requirements of state propaganda. At one extreme, there was Joseph Alsop, who believed that we could win, and at the other, Arthur Schlesinger, who expressed his doubts while adding that “we all pray that Mr. Alsop will be right” and explaining that if, contrary to his expectations, U.S. policy succeeds, “we may all be saluting the wisdom and statesmanship of the American government” in conducting a war that was turning Vietnam into “a land of ruin and wreck.”³³

The popular movement of opposition to the war was doubly threatening to U.S. elites. In the first place, the movement developed out of the control of its “natural leaders,” thus posing a grave threat to order and stability. What is more, the general passivity and obedience on the part of the population that is a basic requirement in a state committed to counterrevolutionary intervention was overcome in significant measure, and dangerous feelings of sympathy developed towards movements of national liberation in the Third World. It is an important task for the intelligentsia in the postwar period to reconstruct the ideological system and to reinstate the patterns of conformism that were shattered by the

opposition and resistance to the U.S. war in Indochina.

The task is eased by the absence of an organized left in the United States, either as a mass movement or among the intelligentsia. As has long been noted, the United States is quite unusual among the industrial democracies in this regard. We cannot explore the causes here, but one should note that state repression is not an insignificant factor.^{[34](#)}

1.3 Picking Up the Pieces: A Return to Counterrevolutionary Intervention

Despite domestic opposition and protest, the basic institutions of U.S. society survived the Indochina crisis undamaged and unchanged. Since the global interests of U.S.-based multinational corporations that have led the United States to militarization and world-wide counterrevolutionary intervention are completely intact, we must assume that the same forces will prevail in the future to produce both direct and indirect intervention when the need arises. Even before the Vietnam War had ended there appeared a spate of articles in the U.S. press and journals, some by opponents of the Vietnam War, urging U.S. military intervention in the Arab oil-producing states. In a secret memorandum leaked to the press in January, 1978, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown “ordered the armed services to plan a special highly mobile force of up to 100,000 troops backed by air and naval units for possible rapid intervention in the Persian Gulf and other areas outside of Europe.”^{[35](#)} Commentators across the narrow spectrum of articulate U.S. opinion, who reflect basic power forces in the United States, are restless and concerned that the “Vietnam hang-up” may pose obstacles to the use of force to protect “the national interest,” a mystification favored by ideologues to refer to the interests of those small groups who dominate the domestic economy and play a major role in setting foreign policy.

The more general context is an attempt to heat up the cold war, which has served both superpowers so effectively as a cover for enlarging the military budget and creating the psychological environment for imperial intervention. President Carter, despite his sharp expansion of military outlays and general moves to restore an atmosphere of great power conflict, has been criticized by liberals as well as conservatives for failing to develop a consistently aggressive posture and to proceed forthrightly to develop such new weapon systems as the neutron bomb.^{[36](#)}

In a typical lament, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial of July 12, 1978 observes sagely that “in the past few months, the Soviets have been toppling Third World nations like dominoes” in accord with “their assessment that this President and this administration can

be successfully bullied, an assessment repeatedly borne out ever since their brutal rejection of the new administration's strategic arms proposals quickly brought forth a U.S. retreat in the negotiations." The strategic balance is shifting in favor of the USSR, while "on the psychological level, meanwhile, the U.S. has been wallowing in the wake of Vietnam, reducing defense spending and dismantling much of the CIA." "To prevent even harsher Soviet bullying in the future, the administration should forget about travel schedules and get about such business as reversing the decision postponing the neutron warhead, building a workable covert capability for the CIA and accelerating the development of the cruise missile." In short, back to the good old days.

One must at least admire the audacity of U.S. ideologists. Thus, only a few months after the war in Indochina ended, we find the respected political analyst Theodore Draper explaining that the Soviet Union has "had much more experience...than the Americans have had" in defining their interests "on a global basis" rather than on a solely continental basis, for "almost six decades." As evidence he cites two examples: Russian support for North Korea and North Vietnam.³⁷ Surely these examples amply demonstrate how Russian imperialism surpasses the timid and hesitant United States in its extent, its scale, and the vigor with which it pursues its global objectives. Such amazing commentary, not unusual among the intelligentsia, can easily be understood on the assumption that the United States is merely engaged in "blundering efforts to do good" when it bombs dams in North Korea in an effort to starve the population into submission or drives the peasants of South Vietnam into "protected areas," not to speak of earlier efforts in the Philippines and elsewhere.

Even as the Vietnam War was reaching its final stage, Kissinger directed the CIA to carry out subversion in Angola and to support a South African invasion and attacks from Zaire, setting off a Russian and Cuban counterreaction in support of the MPLA in Angola—which, predictably, is regularly offered by imperial apologists as proof of the decline of the West in the face of Russian aggression.³⁸

While President Carter has not taken a sufficiently militant stance to satisfy the editorialists of the *New Republic* and the *Wall Street Journal*, nevertheless on occasion he has been gratifyingly belligerent. In his Wake Forest address of March, 1978, Carter proclaimed that "for many years the U.S. has been a truly global power. Our longstanding concerns encompass our own security interests and those of our allies and friends beyond this hemisphere and Europe...We have important responsibilities to enhance peace in East Asia, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and in our own hemisphere. We have the will, and

we must also maintain the capacity, to honor our commitments and to protect our interests in these critical areas.” He also announced that the Pentagon “is improving and will maintain quickly deployable forces—air, land, and sea—to defend our interests throughout the world,” and defended his increase of the military budget in violation of campaign pledges,³⁹ and contrary to *Wall Street Journal* fantasies.

After a brief eclipse, the “defense intellectuals” are once again receiving a respectful hearing from liberal commentators when they call for the use of force to “ensure access to vital resources or to protect embattled investments abroad.”⁴⁰ “Pauker deserves praise,” the liberal analyst of the *Washington Post* explains, “for defining sharply one alternative to [sic] a wiser policy.” Stephen S. Rosenfeld is impressed with Pauker’s analysis of the current North-South conflict, resulting from “the present stage of the political mobilization of the Third World, following several centuries of Western dominance” (Pauker). “Pauker is dealing with elements of the real world that too few other people are willing to look in the eye,” Rosenfeld admiringly reports, even though “one can argue with this or that assumption.” “Whether our frustration in coping with [the postwar world] leads, with Pauker, to a reliance on force or to new forms of accommodation is the question of the age.” History gives a good indication of how this question will be resolved, and how the liberal intelligentsia will react, when it is resolved.

The close association of domestic liberalism and international militancy is a familiar phenomenon. The liberal intellectuals of the *New Republic* circle took credit for leading an unwilling nation into World War I (victimized, as they failed to perceive, by a most effective British campaign of atrocity fabrication; see below, chapter 2, section 1). In more recent times, the liberal intelligentsia have given crucial support to programs of counterrevolutionary violence, justified in terms of “containment” and the other instruments of cold war rhetoric. The euphoria over Kennedy’s program of militarization, international subversion, and brinksmanship is a familiar example. In fact, the liberal intelligentsia were as critical of Eisenhower for his insufficient militancy as many of them are now of Carter for his vacillation in the face of threats to U.S. interests.⁴¹

In summary, there is every reason to suppose that the traditional U.S. government policies of international subversion and—when circumstances warrant—overt aggression will continue so as “to ensure access to vital resources or to protect embattled investments abroad” or the opportunity for future expansion of U.S.-based capital. The sources of these programs in domestic U.S. society have undergone no significant change. And the intelligentsia can be expected to resume their traditional role, somewhat eclipsed

with the trauma of the war in Indochina, in support of state violence and terror. They will construct an appropriate version of history and an interpretation of the contemporary world that will enlist popular support for these programs, or at least ensure a requisite degree of passivity and unconcern. It is in this context that we must approach the investigation of how the propaganda system is coming to terms with developments in postwar Indochina.

Precedents

2.1 The Intelligentsia and the State

In considering the refraction of events in Indochina through the prism of Western ideology, it is useful to bear in mind some relevant precedents. The first class of precedents has to do with the ways in which influential segments of the intelligentsia have responded in the past to abuses of state power; the second, with the record of treatment of former enemies after revolutionary, civil or other military conflicts.

Consider first the typical relations of the intelligentsia to state power. Quite commonly, intellectuals have a strong moral attachment to some favored state—usually their own—and have devoted themselves to lauding its alleged achievements (sometimes real) and concealing its abuses and crimes. At times, the “herd of independent minds” (Harold Rosenberg’s apt phrase) has succeeded in virtually stifling opposing views. One recalls, for example, the reaction to George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia* at a time when Stalinist loyalties were influential—one may also imagine how he would have reacted to its rediscovery and conversion to a cold war document when fashions changed. Similarly today, when “support for Israel” has taken on some of the characteristics of the earlier Stalinism of the intellectuals, it has been difficult for studies critical of one or another aspect of Israeli policies to find a publisher, or if published to receive an honest appraisal, in the United States.¹

When the herd stampedes in a different direction for one reason or another, and service to some favored foreign state no longer has its earlier appeal, we enter the “God that failed” phase, which at one time had a certain validity and integrity, but now has become, all too often, a pose for those who adopt the more typical stance of the intelligentsia, namely, service to the propaganda system of their own state. To this end, it is often convenient to manufacture past allegiance to the current enemies against which recriminations are directed.

The normal case of straight chauvinist bias is, of course, of central importance in shaping the responses and defining the role of mainstream intellectuals, in part for reasons we have already discussed in Volume I, chapter 1, section 16. A primary social role of the group that Isaiah Berlin called “the secular priesthood” is to speak positively of the institutions and objectives of the state and dominant power interests within it in order to

help mobilize public commitment and loyalty.² The adaptability of intellectuals to quality variation in the social order for which devotion is sought has proven to be very great—the pre-Civil War southern intelligentsia even found the slave system worth cherishing despite its economic inefficiency (“slave labor can never be so cheap as what is called free labor”) on the grounds of its sheer humanity and social beneficence (“what is lost to us [from inefficiency] is gained by humanity”).³

A further traditional role of intellectuals is to disseminate propaganda concerning the evil practices, real or fabricated, of current enemies of the state. It is remarkable to see how susceptible intellectuals have been, over the years, to the machinations of the atrocity fabrication industry. A classic example is the success of the British propaganda agencies in whipping up hysteria in the United States over alleged “Hun atrocities” during World War I, particularly among intellectual circles committed to war after the 1916 presidential election, which Wilson had won on a pledge of peace. “It was in the group known as ‘intellectuals,’” H.C. Peterson points out in his study of British efforts to induce Americans to support their cause, “that the best body of propagandists was enlisted.” These efforts resulted in “the enlistment of most of the leaders of intellectual life in America...it was an imposing propaganda group.” “Prominent men of America hastened to join a cause that was intellectually fashionable” and “College professors and school teachers repeated with a great show of wisdom the arguments which had originated” in the British and French propaganda services, whereas “in contradistinction to the easy surrender of American leaders was the stubborn pacifism of the great mass of the population.”⁴

Particularly effective among the intellectuals was the Bryce Report, produced in 1915 by a committee of inquiry chaired by Viscount Bryce, “a venerable scholar”⁵ and former ambassador to the United States, beyond suspicion of Germanophobia, as admitted even by German critics, because of his long association with German universities and receipt of highest honors from the Kaiser. His committee also included other distinguished intellectuals and jurists. Its report was widely circulated throughout the world and scored its greatest success in the United States where it was widely printed in full and had an “overwhelming effect on the American mind and heart” (*Daily Mail*). Lord Bryce was initially skeptical of atrocity propaganda and hoped that his committee would “reduce within a small compass the burden of the charge,” according to an associate. But he was convinced by the “compelling mass of evidence” that had been gathered and became “an advocate of a fight to the finish” (Read).

The committee relied on some 1200 depositions, mostly by Belgian refugees in England, some by Belgian and British soldiers, as well as diaries of German soldiers, regarded as “the most weighty part of the evidence” in the report itself. The depositions were taken by twenty barristers. The committee was aware of the problems posed by refugee testimony and raised the case for skepticism in the introduction to the report:

It is natural to ask whether much of the evidence given, especially by Belgian witnesses, may not be due to excitement and overstrained emotions, and whether, apart from deliberate falsehood people who mean to speak the truth may not in a more or less hysterical condition have been imagining themselves to have seen things which they said they saw.

But the committee was so careful in sifting and evaluating the material that they felt they had overcome this difficulty. The 1200 depositions, incidentally, have not been found.

The report cites innumerable atrocities of the most fiendish sort. However, a Belgian commission of inquiry in 1922, conducting its investigations at the scene of the alleged atrocities, failed to confirm these atrocious crimes and was in general far more restrained. Read himself concludes that “the refugees naturally desired to convince their English hosts that they had fled from monsters,” and discounts the Bryce Report, which, in retrospect, contains little that is credible. According to Peterson,

A large percentage of the events making up the report was based upon second and third hand information. Rumors and opinions were included uncritically. It is not impossible that many of the statements used were the product of leading questions. Incomplete versions of actual events were the basis of the report. In addition, this official report of the British government dignified a great many old wives’ tales and considerable barrack-room gossip (pp. 53-54).

Of one story, Peterson notes, “This, of course, is but a rewrite of a standard wartime atrocity story. Senator Cullen of Nebraska used it in 1898” (p. 55). Of another, “This story is undoubtedly the work of someone’s feverish imagination” (p. 55).

The Bryce Report is perhaps the most important example available of a careful analysis of refugee reports on the part of a group attempting to assess the crimes of an enemy state. It was compiled under near-optimal conditions, and should be carefully borne in mind in evaluating such reports (or alleged reports) under far more ambiguous circumstances, from much more dubious sources.⁶

While U.S. intellectuals assured one another that the nation had entered the war “under the influence of a moral verdict reached after the utmost deliberation by the more thoughtful members of the community,”⁷ it is not unlikely that the British and French propagandists who were feeding them myths about babies with their hands hacked off by German barbarians, etc., were laughing up their sleeves. Very soon, U.S. scholars took their own initiatives, as when a group of historians engaged in what one called “historical

engineering, explaining the issues of the war that we might the better win it,” produced such material as *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy*, a series of forged documents (as was suspected in Europe at the time) purporting to show that the Germans had materially assisted the Bolsheviks in coming to power and that Bolshevik leaders were paid agents of the German general staff.⁸

As intelligence services have become more sophisticated—or at least, better funded—they have learned to play upon the willingness of the more thoughtful members of the community to believe the worst about official enemies of the state to which they are devoted. One technique is to arrange for “scholarly studies,” such as the book by Hoang Van Chi which had such remarkable success in establishing the mythology concerning the bloodbaths during the North Vietnamese land reform.⁹ Another device is to plant stories in the foreign press, to be picked up by “witting” (or perhaps, witless) journalists and others. The CIA recognized long ago that foreign correspondents are particularly susceptible to such deception since they so often tend to rely on local contacts for their “insights.” If these locals can be enlisted in the cause, the news can properly be arranged at the source. Some interesting examples of how it is done appear in the memoirs of Joseph Smith, a CIA agent who was impelled by the appearance of Philip Agee’s exposure of the CIA to write in defense of the Agency.¹⁰ He describes, for example, how he enlisted a local newsman in Singapore on whom “the big-name foreign correspondents...relied...for all their scoops and legwork.” One of the useful contributions of this subordinate was to file a fake story, attributed to British defense officials, reporting that the Chinese were sending troops and supplies to the Viet Minh just prior to the 1954 Geneva conference; the purpose was to undermine the conception of the Viet Minh “as a purely indigenous Vietnamese group of national patriots” by identifying them “with the world Communist movement,” thus strengthening the Western-backed groups at Geneva, Smith explains. Other CIA stations were alerted “to have their press assets ready to pick [the story] up and make sure [it] was used in as many newspapers as possible.”

There is little doubt that such intelligence machinations have influenced scholarship.¹¹ One of the standard claims about the early stages of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, faithfully repeated by John K. Fairbank, Edwin Reischauer and other leading Asian scholars, is that the U.S. intervention was grounded in a “tragic error,” the false belief that Ho Chi Minh was a “frontline agent” for the international Communist conspiracy—had we not been so naive and uninformed, so unpracticed in the ways of imperialism, we would have perceived that Vietnamese communism was in reality a national movement

and been spared the “American tragedy” of Vietnam.¹² This claim is thoroughly refuted by the documentary record, which reveals that from the beginning U.S. analysts understood perfectly well that the source of Viet Minh strength lay in its credentials as the leading force in Vietnamese nationalism, and that after the United States determined to intervene, for quite rational imperial motives that are carefully outlined in planning documents and just as carefully excluded from the scholarly record, efforts were set in motion to establish the preferred (but false) “facts” necessary to justify this intervention, namely, that the Viet Minh were really agents of Moscow or “Peiping.”¹³ Mainstream scholarship can be trusted to conform to the requisite mythology, just as in the true totalitarian societies.

Smith is not the only CIA source for information on news management. To cite only one further case, consider Snepp’s account of the last days of the Saigon regime,¹⁴ also presented from a standpoint quite favorable to the general goals of the CIA though critical of its errors. He points out, for example, that the U.S. embassy in Saigon organized “a noisy press campaign around recent reports that the Communists were torturing and mutilating recalcitrant civilians in newly captured areas,” in the hope that this would generate sympathy for the “South Vietnamese,”¹⁵ but the campaign had the unwanted effect of sparking “panic and chaos” among “the South Vietnamese population itself” (p. 297). Snepp also cites his notebook references to the

atrocities...now imaginatively embroidered by Saigon radio, the local press and the Embassy. At the Ambassador’s orders, Joe Bennett [the political counselor] is still zealously churning out his share of them, playing on thirdhand reports relayed out of Ban Me Thuot by a Buddhist monk. “They’re tearing out women’s fingernails up there and chopping up the town council,” one of Bennett’s younger staffers advised me gleefully this afternoon. “That should turn some heads in Congress.”

The ambassador and CIA chief, Snepp reports, “apparently consider the latest crop too useful to risk putting them to any...test” of veracity; again, he notes, the stories terrorized the Vietnamese.¹⁶

Perhaps the most cynical example of atrocity management that Snepp cites was “Operation Baby-Lift,” which “in a sense” was “a fraud from the start,” in which children who “had been languishing for years in Saigon’s orphanages and were in no immediate danger from the Communist offensive” were, in effect, kidnapped and flown out of the country to the United States in the hope, expressed by Ambassador Martin, “that the spectacle of hundreds of Vietnamese babies being taken under the American wing would generate sympathy for the South Vietnamese cause around the world.” Not all of them made it; over 200 were killed in the crash of a C-5A air transport, somewhat diluting the intended propaganda effect, though the operation continued.¹⁷

It is predictable that the exposure of such tactics from the source, as in the past, will have little or no effect in diminishing the credulity of Western intellectuals with regard to the next batch of atrocity stories. We have discussed other examples of atrocities management in Volume I, chapter 5. The will to believe patriotic truths and a positive desire to aid the cause of one's own state are dominant forces, and those abiding by such principles may also anticipate corresponding rewards and privileges.

The general subservience of the articulate intelligentsia to the framework of state propaganda is not only unrecognized, it is strenuously denied by the propaganda system. The press and the intelligentsia in general are held to be fiercely independent, critical, antagonistic to the state, even suffused by a trendy anti-Americanism. It is quite true that controversy rages over government policies and the errors or even crimes of government officials and agencies. But the impression of internal dissidence is misleading. A more careful analysis shows that this controversy takes place, for the most part, within the narrow limits of a set of patriotic premises. Thus it is quite tolerable—indeed, a contribution to the propaganda system—for the Free Press to denounce the government for its “errors” in attempting “to defend South Vietnam from North Vietnamese aggression,” since by so doing it helps to establish more firmly the basic myth: that the United States was not engaged in a savage attack on South Vietnam but was rather “defending” it. If even the hostile critics adopt these assumptions, then clearly they must be true.

The beauty of the democratic systems of thought control, as contrasted with their clumsy totalitarian counterparts, is that they operate by subtly establishing on a voluntary basis—aided by the force of nationalism and media control by substantial interests—presuppositions that set the limits of debate, rather than by imposing beliefs with a bludgeon. Then let the debate rage; the more lively and vigorous it is, the better the propaganda system is served, since the presuppositions (U.S. benevolence, lack of rational imperial goals, defensive posture, etc.) are more firmly established. Those who do not accept the fundamental principles of state propaganda are simply excluded from the debate (or if noticed, dismissed as “emotional,” “irresponsible,” etc.).

In a typical example, when the *New York Times* (5 April 1975) gave its retrospective assessment of the Vietnam tragedy, it referred to “the decade of fierce polemics” (to be resolved in due course by “Clio, the goddess of history”) between the hawks who thought that the United States could win and the doves who were convinced that the U.S. objective was unattainable. Those who opposed the war in principle—specifically, the mainstream

of the peace movement—were simply not part of the debate, as far as the *Times* was concerned. Their position need not be refuted; it does not exist.^{[18,19](#)}

An excellent illustration of how the ideological institutions operate to buttress the state propaganda system by identifying the media as “hypercritical,” so much so as to endanger “free institutions,” is provided by a two-volume Freedom House study of the alleged bias and incompetence of the media in portraying the Tet Offensive as a defeat for the United States and thus contributing to the failure of U.S. arms by their excessive pessimism.^{[20](#)} The name “Freedom House” should at once arouse a certain skepticism among people attuned to the machinations of modern propaganda systems, just as any good student of Orwell should have realized that a change in the name of the U.S. War Department to “Defense Department” in 1947 signalled that henceforth the state would be shifting from defense to aggressive war. In fact, “Freedom House” is no less of an Orwellian construction, as its record indicates.^{[21](#)}

The study in question is in the Freedom House tradition. Contrary to its intentions and stated conclusions, any independent-minded reader should infer from its 1500 pages of text and documents that the media were remarkably loyal to the basic doctrines of the state and tended to view the events of the period strictly from the government’s point of view. But these facts, though obvious from the documents cited, completely escaped the author and his Freedom House sponsors; naturally, since they take ordinary press subservience as a norm. What is most striking about the study, apart from its general ineptitude,^{[22](#)} are the premises adopted without comment throughout: the press is unjustifiably “pessimistic” if it tends to believe that U.S. force may not prevail in “defending South Vietnam,” and is “optimistic” if it expresses faith in the ultimate success of U.S. state violence. Pessimism is wrong even if based on fact and in conformity with the views of the Pentagon and CIA (as was often the case, specifically, in the instance in question). Since optimism is demanded irrespective of facts, the implication of this study is that “responsible” media must deliberately lie in order to serve the state in an undeviatingly propagandistic role.

To summarize the first class of precedents, the intelligentsia have been prone to various forms of state worship, the most striking and significant being subservience to the propaganda systems of their own government and social institutions. This subservience often takes the form of childish credulity that is effectively exploited by the organizations that are devoted to atrocity fabrication and other modes of ideological control. Sometimes the credulity is feigned, as the propagandist knowingly transmits a useful lie. All of this serves as a warning that should be borne in mind as we approach the issues at hand.

2.2 In the Light of History

We turn next to the second class of precedents, namely, the record of retribution following other wars. Here, one must be cautious with analogies. The U.S. war in Vietnam—later all of Indochina—reached levels of savagery and destructiveness that have rarely been paralleled, so that one might have anticipated that retribution by the victors would also pass well beyond normal levels. Nevertheless, it is useful to survey some of these “normal levels,” as a suggestion of a “base line” for evaluation of the situation in postwar Indochina.

To begin with a recent example, consider the immediate aftermath of World War II—recalling that the United States was never attacked directly (Hawaii and the Philippines were colonies), so that the more primitive forms of vengeance were not to be expected. The U.S. army of occupation in Japan, according to Japanese sources, indulged in rape, pillage, and murder.²³ But that, perhaps, is to be expected of a conquering army, so let us consider the cooler and more considered behavior of the political leadership. In Japan, “some 5,700 Japanese were tried on conventional war crimes charges, and 920 of these men were executed” while “an administrative purge removed over 200,000 Japanese at least temporarily from political activity.”²⁴ Some of the trials were sheer farce; for example, the trial and execution of General Yamashita for crimes committed by troops over which he had no control whatsoever.²⁵ The principles on which the prosecution was based were outlined by Justice Robert H. Jackson in these terms: “our test of what legally is crime gives recognition to those things which fundamentally outraged the conscience of the American people...I believe that those instincts of our people were right and they should guide us as the fundamental tests of criminality.”²⁶ As Minnear comments, “Law so defined seems little different from the Nazi ‘law’ that had aroused so much antagonism among the Allies,” specifically, the Nazi law of 1935 which held that “whoever commits an action which the law declares to be punishable or which is deserving of punishment according to the fundamental idea of a penal law and the sound perception of the people shall be punished.”

“None of the defendants at Tokyo was accused of having personally committed an atrocity,” Minnear writes, but only of having conspired to authorize such crimes or having failed to stop them, and no evidence was submitted that such crimes were government policy (66f.). One Japanese general was executed on the sole grounds that he had failed “to take adequate steps to secure the observance and prevent breaches of conventions and laws of war in respect of prisoners of war and civilian internees.”²⁷ Consider the fate of

the U.S. military and political leadership if such standards were applied in the case of Vietnam. The sentence, in this case, was based on a split decision with a majority of 6 of 11 Justices favoring the sentence of hanging that was administered. On the other executions, the Court was split 7 to 4. The U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice requires unanimity of a court-martial for sentencing to death and a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority for confinement for more than ten years (Minnear, 91-2).

Keeping solely to the Tokyo Tribunal itself, of the 25 defendants, seven were condemned to death by hanging, two died during the trial, and six more died in prison (31, 172); Prime Minister Konoe committed suicide when he learned of his arrest (105). Of the many procedural inadequacies of the Tribunal, perhaps the most striking is that no neutral Justices were appointed (let alone Japanese), but only representatives of countries allied against Japan, including one Justice who was a survivor of the Bataan death march (76-82).

Acts committed by the anti-Japanese alliance were excluded from consideration at the Tribunal. As Indian Justice Pal commented in his impressive dissent, “When the conduct of the nations is taken into account the law will perhaps be found to be *that only a lost war is a crime*.”²⁸ There was, for example, no reference to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—though as Pal correctly remarked, “Nothing like this could be traced to the credit of the present accused,” and as Justice Röling of the Netherlands commented some years later: “From the Second World War above all two things are remembered: the German gas chambers and the American atomic bombings” (Minnear, 101).

Though it is difficult to assign a measure, nevertheless it seems likely that Western racism was a factor, over and above the general submissiveness to the state propaganda system, in permitting the atomic bombing to be so quickly forgotten, or more accurately, unheeded in the West. One of the leading statesmen of the era, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King of the Liberal Party, made the following entry in his diary on August 6, 1945: “It is fortunate that the use of the bomb should have been upon the Japanese rather than upon the white races of Europe.” Such sentiments are, of course, not to be publicly expressed. In fact, in *The Mackenzie King Record*, the 1968 biographical project of King’s literary executors, the sentence is excised, though the diary was kept as a record to “recount and explain” the conduct of public affairs and is described in the official Canadian military history as “the most important single political document in twentieth-century Canadian history.”²⁹ The same distinguished statesman also urged in 1944 that all “disloyal” Japanese-Canadians be deported “as soon as physically possible,” while those

adjudged “loyal” should be dispersed. Though civil libertarian pressures in Canada prevented the enactment of this proposal or other racist measures of the sort instituted against the local population of Japanese origin in the United States, nevertheless “over 4,000 persons, many of them Canadian since birth, were shipped to devastated Japan in 1946-1947.”³⁰ Such vengeful and racist acts in a tolerant and wealthy Western country untouched by Japanese aggression are not recalled, needless to say, when the time comes to raise a chorus of protest—justified on libertarian and humanist grounds that are foreign to Western thought and practice—against expulsions and oppression in postwar Indochina.

The deep moral flaw of the Tokyo Tribunal, noted above, also undermines the moral basis for the Nuremberg Tribunal, which administered 12 death sentences to Nazi war criminals. The chief counsel for the prosecution at Nuremberg, Telford Taylor, has observed that “since both sides had played the terrible game of urban destruction—the Allies far more successfully—there was no basis for criminal charges against Germans and Japanese, and in fact no such charges were brought.”³¹ The Nuremberg Tribunal was empowered “to try and punish persons who, *acting in the interests of the European Axis countries...* committed any of the following crimes.”³² The operational definition of “war crime” is: criminal act committed by the defeated enemy and not (allegedly) by the victor. Only a lost war is a crime.

Apart from the major war crimes trial, the Allies conducted a “denazification” procedure in occupied Germany which was described by General Lucius Clay, who was responsible for the U.S. zone, as “perhaps, the most extensive legal procedure the world had ever witnessed.” He reports that “in the U.S. zone alone more than 13 million persons had been involved, of whom three and two-thirds million were found chargeable, and of these some 800,000 persons were made subject to penalty for their party affiliations or actions.”³³ This procedure was regarded as an indication of the deep moral principle of the victors.

The same is true of current reaction to the Allied treatment of captured POWs. In Britain, there were some 400,000 German POWs. By Autumn 1944 they were being used for forced labor as a form of “reparations.” Repatriation began in September 1946 and continued until the summer of 1948, over three years after the German surrender. After the war, too, the POWs spent the harsh winter of 1945-1946 in tents in violation of the 1929 Geneva Convention. The POWs referred to themselves as “slave labour,” with some justice. A “stereotype” was “heard among the POW that ‘a venomous re-education drove back to National Socialism many a man who had honestly been seeking a new way of

life.’ The stereotype endured in varying measure for the whole of captivity and, as an expression of resentment, beyond it.” The psychological state of the POWs changed “from the anxiety and hope of the first half of 1946 to the depression and nihilism of 1948,” according to Henry Faulk.³⁴

The British government, naturally, saw matters in a different light. The general aims of the “re-education” program, Faulk writes, were “to present the British Commonwealth of Nations as an example of a democratic community in action, while avoiding the projection of Britain as a model to be slavishly copied.” Faulk does not explore the choice of representatives of this “democratic community” as “guest lecturers.” Presumably they did not include, for example, Jawaharlal Nehru, who observed that the ideology of British rule in India “was that of the herrenvolk and the Master Race,” an idea that is “inherent in imperialism” and “was proclaimed in unambiguous language by those in authority” and put into practice as “Indians as individuals were subjected to insult, humiliation, and contemptuous treatment.”³⁵

In the case of Britain, the abuse of German prisoners can be explained, if not justified, as revenge for the terror Britain suffered at their hands (residents of Hamburg and Dresden might have harbored similar thoughts). But no such justification can be brought to bear on the treatment of German POWs by the United States. Judith Gansberg, in a study based on recently declassified documents, provides an awed and admiring account of an “unusual plan to reeducate the 372,000 German prisoners.”³⁶ “The reeducation program,” she notes, “adopted at the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, was undoubtedly a violation of the spirit of the Geneva Convention’s provisions against denationalization. It was a massive multimedia effort to bring about a democratic trend among the prisoners which would not only change their views but could also provide a vanguard for redirecting postwar Germany” and “to return the men to Christian practices”(2, 110-1). It was run by a “small group of talented and dedicated men” and was a “unique experiment in political reprogramming” (6). Only “the most incorrigible Nazis—less than 10 percent—never succumbed to any efforts to reeducate them”(99). There were some difficulties in reeducation; for example, some POWs were appalled by the treatment of Blacks in the United States. But in general it was regarded as a smashing success.

The general tone is conveyed in a commencement address to the prisoners by Professor Howard Mumford Jones of Harvard:

It may seem odd to appeal to the spirit of a prison camp and of a military installation, but what is the idea behind Fort Kearney unless it is the notion of human dignity and of the brotherhood of man? When therefore I say to you it is my hope, as it is the hope of other members of this faculty, of officers of this post, and of your

fellow prisoners...that the spirit of Fort Kearney may go with you wherever you are, I speak for these, your associates, as well as for myself, no less than for the American government which has sanctioned this amazing enterprise. May you be each one, a good Christian soldier in the campaign against hatred and ill will. (p. 84)

The first list of names of Fort Kearney prisoners to be repatriated was released in September, 1945 (prisoners remained in the United States until July, 1946). In September, 1944, it was decided that “reeducation” was an inappropriate term. An office memo states that “the terms ‘reeducation’ or ‘reorientation’ of prisoners of war will not be used in referring to the mission of this Branch. The term ‘I.D. Program’ (Intellectual Diversion) will be used whenever reference is made to the program” (p. 89).

Reeducation and intellectual diversion were not the only devices used to return the prisoners to Christian ways. A field intelligence officer “admitted having shot a German captive in the head to induce his comrades to talk. But that was only a first step...” The British beat prisoners to get information. “Many stories of brutality were true” in U.S. POW camps. Prisoners were starved into collapse, etc., but no official actions were taken to modify these practices. In July, 1945 a guard strafed POW tents, killing 8, among other atrocities.³⁷

In the United States, as in Britain, prisoners were used for forced labor. Truman delayed repatriation for 60 days for POWs essential for the harvest. POWs performed 20 million man-days of work on army posts and 10 million for contract employers (farm work, lumber industry, etc.). Some were assigned to work at the Chemical Warfare Center at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland (pp. 34-7).

The “amazing enterprise” of “reeducation” (rather: Intellectual Diversion) has evoked much admiration in the United States. Reviewing Gansberg’s book in the *New York Times* (1 February, 1978), Thomas Lask writes that “it was a startlingly original notion to work at converting German thinking, and no praise is too high for those United States Army men and educators who conceived and carried out the effort.” He notes that the operation had to be carried out in secret—“the Army did not want American POW’s in Germany to be subjected to the same treatment.” The book has some flaws, Lask believes: it did not, for example, explore “American innocence” sufficiently. But in general, the reeducation program must be regarded as one of the marvels of American humanitarianism.

To appreciate the quite amazing hypocrisy of this reaction—indeed, of the book itself—it is necessary to turn to the flood of denunciations of the barbarity of the Vietnamese in conducting a program of “reeducation” (which includes rehabilitation of the hundreds of thousands of drug addicts, prostitutes, torturers, and other debris left by the U.S. war), during exactly the same period. Evidently, it all depends on whose ox is being gored.

The aftermath of World War II was not limited to the pleasures of military occupation—pillage, rape, and murder—judicial murder, “Intellectual Diversion,” years of forced labor, occasional killings of POWs in prison camps, massive purges, and other such humane practices for the defeated; and massacres, union-busting by gangsters, and so on, for victors with the wrong politics as determined by their liberators. It also included direct retribution against collaborators with the Nazis on a scale that is not appreciated in the West, though it has been well-documented. French historian of the resistance Robert Aron is one of those who has honestly faced the grim task of determining the facts.³⁸ He cites police and other reports of murderous reprisals up to “ten months after the Liberation of practically the whole country,” including collective massacres discovered many months after when mass graves were located. Many of the facts are unknown because “the families of the victims had often been terrorized and preferred to conceal their misfortunes rather than go to the authorities.” Aron cites journalists’ figures of 50,000 killed but notes, correctly, that such estimates must be disregarded as “figures adopted lightly in a climate of excitement by which armies in a campaign or frightened civilian populations crystallize their emotions.” He also cites the study of Pleyber-Grandjean (one of the “victims of the Liberation”), “who made an effort to give an objective account of a number of atrocities in *Ecrits de Paris*. The facts he gives are for the most part exact, but he exaggerates the conclusions he draws from them.” Pleyber-Grandjean estimated the number massacred at seven million—no doubt an exaggeration.

Aron undertook a careful study, basing himself in part on detailed information provided by the French gendarmerie. He concludes that the number killed in summary executions just prior to or after Liberation must be at a “minimum...between thirty and forty thousand”—“Approximately one Frenchman in a thousand was the victim to the excesses committed at the Liberation.” Translating to South Vietnam, where the war was far more brutal and the aggressors and their collaborators exercised incomparably greater violence than the Nazis did in France, we would have some 20,000 murdered at the time of Liberation, or, if we accept the figures of “victims of the Liberation” with the credulity typical of Western commentators in the case of Indochina, about 3 million outright murders. Fortunately, the Vietnamese did not keep to the standards of Western humanism.

We might add that the massacres in France were carried out during a period when General Eisenhower, under a directive from President Roosevelt issued with Churchill’s approval, exercised “supreme authority” in France, and the “ultimate determination of where, when and how civil administration...shall be exercised by French citizens.” The

Provisional Government of de Gaulle was not recognized until October, 1944.³⁹

Imagine that Germany had survived the second World War unconquered, but driven from occupied Europe, still a major world power under the regime that had conducted the war. How would these events in liberated France have been perceived? One can easily guess. The figure of seven million dead would no doubt have become gospel truth—much as Americans and Frenchmen now circulate figures with wild abandon about Indochina, as we shall see—and there would be no limits to the indignation over the barbarism tolerated (or, the claim would be, encouraged) by the U.S. occupying forces that had conquered peaceful France, overthrowing its legitimate government virtually without French assistance. Similarly, we may imagine how an undefeated Japan might react to the spectacle of the annual reenactment of atomic bombing, e.g., at a Texas air show in October, 1977 with a B-29 flown by Paul Tibbets, the retired Air Force general who dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima, before an admiring audience of 20,000.⁴⁰ Perhaps the Germans, in our invented nightmare, would have proposed a reenactment of the second major atrocity that we recall from World War II, according to Justice Röling (cf. p. 37, above).

But Germany was defeated and occupied, so we are spared such venomous hypocrisy.

But even defeated Germany provides some precedents. The *Washington Post* (10 April, 1977) featured a report from Dachau, which “in its own way is reflective of West German attitudes toward the question of dealing with the Nazi era.” There is, for example, “no mention of the participation of German industry in the use of slave-camp labor. ‘It is a guilt never acknowledged here and rarely spoken about in our history books,’ says Barbara Distel, the Dachau museum director... ‘The general attitude really is not to talk about it, to forget about it if possible,’” she adds, in reference to Dachau. But Germans, even those directly implicated, are quick to concede error, perhaps even “tragic error”: “Under interrogation in captivity Goering said that the liquidation of the Jews was a vast political blunder; many would have made good nationalists and joined in the liquidation of the Communists. If only Hitler had not confused these two issues, he said.”⁴¹ And then there is the man known as the “hangman of Lyons,” twice sentenced to death in absentia by French courts for war crimes and now residing in peace in Bolivia, who concedes that “the mass killings of Jews constituted a grave error. Many of us SS officers believed that the Jews could have been put to better use building roads to facilitate the advance of our troops” (*New York Times*, 18 May, 1975). Not all see error. For example, the chief legal officer of Lower Saxony, who resigned in March, 1978 after the disclosure that in a 1936

doctoral dissertation he had advocated that “only a racially valuable person has the right to exist within the community. Someone who is useless for the community because of his inferiority, or even harmful to it, is to be eliminated...The law as a whole must serve racial development.” But he felt neither “morally, nor politically” obliged to quit (*New York Times*, 25 March, 1978).

We leave to the reader the choice of appropriate current parallels.

Like virtually all wars of imperial aggression, the war in Indochina was in part a civil war. Substantial Vietnamese forces fought with the French, and the U.S. invaders organized a large and well-equipped—though unwilling and demoralized—army, as well as a network of terror organizations to assist them in destroying local resistance and maintaining the U.S.-imposed civil regime. Civil wars tend to be unusual in the cruelty they evoke. As a final precedent, let us consider a civil war that played a significant role in U.S. and world history, namely, the American revolution, an example that was cited by Bernard Fall in reference to U.S. propaganda about “outside intervention” (by Vietnamese) in support of the South Vietnamese who were being massacred by the U.S. invaders in South Vietnam.^{[42](#)}

The analogy is far from close. The American revolution was minuscule in comparison with the Vietnamese in the degree of force used by those opposed to the revolution, and in the level of internal military and social conflict that developed. “The willingness of both British and rebel leaders to accept, if not always enforce, the fairly humane conventions of eighteenth-century warfare served to mitigate some of the radical effects that civil wars often have on society” (Shy, 200), and obviously the force levels were of vastly different orders of magnitude. In addition, the relative affluence of the American colonies significantly eased the impact of the war, although there was much suffering. Shy writes: “Revolutionary America may have been a middle-class society, happier and more prosperous than any other in its time, but it contained a large and growing number of fairly poor people, and many of them did much of the actual fighting and suffering between 1775 and 1783: A very old story” (173). Furthermore, “one measurable effect of war might have been to widen the gap between richer and poorer Americans” (197).

It is important to recall that the war “remained a civil conflict in America after it had become a struggle between the United States and Great Britain”^{[43](#)}—and between France and Great Britain. “In proportion to population almost as many Americans were engaged in fighting other Americans during the Revolution as did so during the Civil War” (Shy, 183). The fact has seldom been given prominence, in part because so many of the

Loyalists simply fled, expecting, as one said, that if the rebels should gain independence “that unfortunate land would be a scene of bloody discord and desolation for ages.”⁴⁴ “Palmer suggests that, unlike France, the American counterrevolutionary refugees never returned, creating an illusion of tranquility and unity in the postwar Republic.”⁴⁵ Van Doren summarizes the exodus as follows:

There are no accurate figures as to how many persons including women and children left the United States on account of loyalty to the British Empire, but it may have been as high as 100,000, of whom 35,000 may have gone from New York alone...The expulsion was so thorough that the next generation of Americans, with few former loyalists as reminders, almost forgot the civil aspects of the war and came to think of it as a war solely against England. The loyalists disappeared from American history, at least from ordinary knowledge of it [until the 20th century] (433).

Recall that the white population of the United States was then about two and a half million, and that “at least a fifth of the white population—a half-million people—behaved in ways that enable us to identify them as Loyalist.”⁴⁶ Comparative figures for South Vietnam would be about 4 million supporters of the United States and 800,000 refugees fleeing the victors. Comparative figures for all of Vietnam would double these numbers, approximately.

During the war, thousands of Loyalists escaped with the British when they evacuated some area, most coming to live in New York “in swarming desperation” (Van Doren, 12-13). Later, tens of thousands fled with the British, including “ragged unpaid American soldiers drifting down the Hudson Valley to sign on as sailors in the ships which were evacuating British forces”(Shy, 17). “Genuine support for the war appears to have declined” from 1775, Shy writes, as people “grew weary of being bullied by local committees of safety, by corrupt deputy assistant commissaries of supply, and by bands of ragged strangers with guns in their hands calling themselves soldiers of the Revolution,” and “got angry when British or Hessian or Tory troops misbehaved...The years from 1776 to 1782 might indeed be recounted as horror stories of terrorism, rapacity, mendacity, and cowardice, not to blame our ancestors for these things, but to remind us what a war fought by the weak must look like” (Shy, 13f.).

Both Loyalists and rebels “gave credit and currency to stories of inhuman deeds done by either to the other,” and the Loyalists argued “that the American governments were more oppressive than the British had ever been” (Van Doren, 120). In particular, the British “had frequently upheld the rights of the Indians against encroaching American settlers” (*ibid.*, 120), one reason why many Indian tribes supported the British, as did many Blacks, recognizing what lay ahead for them if the rebels proved victorious.⁴⁷ In areas where the British “hardly appeared or not at all,” “Tories either ran away, kept quiet,

even serving in the rebel armies, or occasionally took a brave but hopeless stand against Revolutionary committees and their gunmen” (Shy, 178). Meanwhile, at home, the British government attempted “to justify a long expensive war to an unhappy public on the ground that the king had a solemn commitment to defend his numerous American supporters against a rebel bloodbath” (Shy, 185). How familiar it all sounds.

Some of the most graphic accounts of the nature of the civil conflict are found in the letters of General Nathanael Greene, who commanded the southern Continental Army from 1780 to 1783.⁴⁸

Greene wrote:

...the whigs and tories pursue one another with the most relentless fury killing and destroying each other whenever they meet. Indeed, a great part of this country is already laid waste and in the utmost danger of becoming a desert. The great bodies of militia that have been in service this year employed against the enemy and in quelling the tories have almost laid waste the country and so corrupted the principles of the people that they think of nothing but plundering one another...The country is full of little armed parties who follow their resentments with little less than savage fury...[the South is] still torn to pieces by little parties of disaffected who elude all search and conceal themselves in the thickets and swamps from the most diligent pursuit and issue forth from these hidden recesses committing the most horrid murders and plunder and lay waste the country (pp. 294-5).

Greene employed terrorism both to improve the morale of his supporters and to frighten the “disaffected.” He told his subordinate, General Thomas Sumter, that partisans were “to strike terror into our enemies and give spirit to our friends” (308). An example was a successful raid that Greene described to Thomas Jefferson as follows:

They made a dreadful carnage of them, upwards on one-hundred were killed and most of the rest cut to pieces. It has had a very happy effect on those disaffected persons of which there are too many in this country (p. 308).

But Greene also recognized that terror was a dubious tactic. In 1781 he outlined a new strategy to Sumter in the following terms:

Don't spare any pains to take off the tories from the British interest for tho we have great reason to hate them and vengeance would dictate one universal slaughter yet when we consider how many of our good people must fall a sacrifice in doing it we shall find it will be more for our interest to forgive than to persecute. This was always my opinion and if the war continues in this country, unless we can detach the people from the British interest we shall feel more inconveniences from them than from all the British army. Indeed we do now (p. 310).

Loyalist sympathies were sufficiently strong so that a British secret agent expressed his conviction that the British could raise a Provincial army strong enough to defeat Washington, whose troops were not, “as has been represented, a respectable body of yeomanry...but a contemptible band of vagrants, deserters, and thieves,” mainly Irish (Van Doren, 110). The British did attempt “Americanization” of the war in the latter stages, in part because of the “unhappy public” at home (Shy, 185). The secret agent's

judgment might have proven valid had it not been for the French intervention supporting the insurgency—what would now be called “terrorist bands.” As it was, “New York alone furnished about 15,000 men to the British army and navy, and over 8,000 loyalist militia.” With the contribution of the other colonies, “we may safely state that 50,000 soldiers, either regular or militia, were drawn into the service of Great Britain from her American sympathizers” (Van Tyne, 182-3).

During the war, the “persecuted tories had a sanctuary” in New York, to which they fled “from every colony...by boat, on foot, in carriage or on horse, ready to thank God when they had passed the British lines, and had left behind them the din of persecution,” including tarring and feathering, “hoisting the victim upon a liberty pole,” forced oaths of loyalty, jailing for long periods without trial, confiscation of lands, and other forms of oppression and terror. Many were prevented from fleeing, others driven out. “The records kept by the committees of safety prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, the Tory charges that committee rule was despotic and tyrannous,” while “from the Tory pen we have a picture of an inexorable reign of terror” (Van Tyne, pp. 128, 61, 66, 230). While few were actually killed, many were tried and sentenced—Washington noted in a letter that “one or two have done what a great number ought to have done long ago, commit suicide”—referring to these “miserable set of beings,” “these wretched creatures” who retained their loyalty to the crown (*ibid.*, p. 57).⁴⁹

Many fled abroad to await the outcome of the war, choosing to commit themselves “to the mercy of the waves at a tempestuous season rather than meet their offending countrymen,” as one Tory wrote (Van Tyne, 57). The largest fleet ever seen in America, more than 170 sail, departed in March, “the most tempestuous month of the year on the American coast,” fearing that “without a miracle the wretched fleet must be dispersed and lost...on their top-heavy decks were huddled a wretched throng of soldiers and refugees... It was impossible, thought one of them, that more events could concur to render their distress complete, and their ruin almost inevitable” (*ibid.*, 58). “Sir Henry Clinton wrote that nothing distressed him so much as the applications he hourly received from great numbers of refugees who crowded to New York from every quarter of America. Many, he said, had been reduced from affluent circumstances to the utmost penury by their attachment to the king” (*ibid.*, 254). As the British were withdrawn, more refugees fled, primarily to British American territories, including Nova Scotia, which one described as “the most inhospitable clime that ever mortal set foot on” (*ibid.*, 294). There, “women, delicately reared, cared for their infants beneath canvas tents, rendered habitable only by the banks of snow which lay six feet deep” while “strong and proud men wept like

children, and lay down in their snow-bound tents to die” (*ibid.*, 305).

But the “boat people” were perhaps more fortunate than those who remained. In violation of the treaty with the British and in spite of the recommendation of Congress, after the war “confiscation still went on actively; governors of the states were urged to exchange lists of the proscribed persons, that no Tory might find a resting place in the United States; and in nearly every state they were disfranchised, while in many localities they were tarred and feathered, driven from town and warned never to return,” or sometimes murdered (*ibid.*, 295).

One can imagine what a British Henry Kamm⁵⁰ would have made of all of this. We also note that these aspects of the Revolutionary War are not exactly centerpieces of school textbooks describing the struggle of “Americans” for freedom from onerous foreign rule.

We stress again that the analogy to Indochina, which will be obvious to any reader of the daily press, should not be drawn too closely. There are many crucial points of difference. The American rebels, as noted, were supported—indeed far outnumbered—by the military forces of France, while no foreign troops were engaged on the side of the Vietnamese. The force brought to bear by the British and their local allies was infinitesimal as compared with Westmoreland’s killing machine, and in fact the civil conflict enflamed by foreign aggression from 1946 was also, naturally, far more fierce, given the nature of the intervention by France and the United States (and in the early stages, Britain, which prepared the way for the return of French imperialism). Vietnam is far poorer than the American colonies, which were already ranked high among the more affluent societies in the world, and its foreign enemy vastly richer and more powerful, as well as incomparably more savage. Nor is there in Indochina anything comparable to the exploitation of Blacks and persecution of native Americans. Despite these and other crucial differences, it is nevertheless interesting to recall this example of a civil conflict enmeshed in a struggle for national independence, and its consequences for the victims—Loyalists, Blacks and Native Americans.⁵¹

To conclude, we note that it is standard in later scholarly work in American history to recount, in part at least, the torment of Native Americans and Blacks at the hands of the victors in the revolutionary struggle, though it is equally common to describe this oppression, far from ended, as an unfortunate “exception” to the general humanism of the American experience. In a review of a book that is “rooted in the familiar nationalistic strains of Daniel Boorstin’s view of U.S. political history,” Clarence Karier makes the

following apt comment:

For the Irish who died building the railroads and canals in the East, the children who died in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, the women who died chained to their machines in factories, the Polish laborers burned to death in the steel mills of Gary, the Indians wasted by the Gatling gun in the West, or the slave who felt the white man's lash, Cremin enters the "caveat" that these were "inexcusable omissions." When, one might ask, do these "inexcusable omissions" cease to be "omissions" and when do they become an organic part of American history?⁵²

This point might be borne in mind, along with the historical background just recounted, when we turn to the question of how the Indochinese peoples are facing their incomparably more severe problems, unrelated to anything in the U.S. experience not only because of the destructive impact of colonialism and the absence of the immense natural advantages of the American colonists, but also because they have been subjected to murderous destruction, the likes of which the world has rarely seen, on the part of those who now feel no shame when they let the words "human rights" fall from their lips.

Many other examples of a similar sort may be cited. The historical record serves as a kind of "base line" against which we may evaluate events in postwar Indochina. To repeat, while Western propaganda attributes the suffering of the people of Indochina—those who flee the war or its aftermath, those who are persecuted within, and the vast majority who are attempting to reconstruct some sort of viable existence from the wreckage—to the evil effects of Communist ideology or the generally "uncivilized" character of the Third World, which has failed, to our dismay, to absorb Western humanism, an honest historical analysis would proceed quite differently. It would begin by establishing the common practice in comparable situations, then add an enormous increment attributable to the unusual barbarity of the U.S. attack with its legacy of destruction, bitterness and hatred. Atrocities and oppression that exceed this measure might reasonably be attributed to Indochinese communism.

Applying these standards to Vietnam, there seems little doubt that the aftermath of the revolutionary victory has been remarkably free of vengefulness. The same is true in Laos. No doubt Cambodia differs, even when one discounts for the stream of falsification in Western propaganda. Finally, in evaluating these painful and troubled issues, we must bear in mind the long record of atrocity fabrication and the traditional gullibility of the intelligentsia regarding the alleged evil practices of enemies of their own state.

Refugees: Indochina and Beyond

We now turn to the central topic of this volume, the nature of the evidence that has been presented in the West with regard to postwar Indochina, the uses to which such evidence is being put, and the significance of these facts.

One major focus of concern and outrage in the West has been the continuing flight of refugees from Indochina. In a review that is unusual in its honesty, the London *Economist* reports that:

16,000 boat people [from Vietnam] have landed in neighbouring south-east Asian countries so far this year; the monthly rate has increased from 980 in December to 6,000 in May. Partly because of the wide publicity these doughty seafarers have received, partly because refugees from Vietnam tend to have other advantages (gold bars, skills, relatives in America), a remarkable high proportion of the Vietnamese who have escaped since the spring of 1975 have been permanently resettled. Only 12,000 boat people (10,000 of them in Malaysia) and a few thousand other Vietnamese are currently waiting for a place to go...Thailand, by geographical ill-fortune, is still today the largest repository of unsettled Indochinese refugees, with 100,000 people registered in refugee camps. The great majority of these—83,500 Laotians and 14,000 Cambodians, who are mostly tribesmen and illiterate farmers—have little chance of moving on.¹

The *Economist* is certainly correct in adding that “there is room for far more generosity” from the West with regard to these unfortunate victims.

What is unusual about the *Economist* report is that it is not limited to refugees from postwar Communism, as is the general practice. The *Economist* observes that “nearly 400,000 people have walked or sailed away from their home countries since the beginning of the year” in Asia² (far less than Africa, where the same report estimates the number of refugees at 2 million).³ “The biggest single group,” the report continues, are the Muslim Bengali people who have been fleeing from Burma to Bangladesh at the rate of about 2,000 a day. A June 24 report in the *Economist* estimates their number at 175,000. An earlier report of June 10 reports that they arrive in Bangladesh “bearing gruesome tales of atrocities committed by advancing waves of Burmese soldiers” and that they are being forced off their lands by Buddhist tribesmen.

We learn more about the refugees from Burma elsewhere in the foreign press. Richard Nations reports in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (30 June 1978) that 200,000 refugees fled from Burmese terror in two months—a far higher rate than the 2,000 per day estimated by the *Economist*. During the initial phase of the flight, the rate was 8,000 per day according to “one United Nations veteran of relief operations throughout the world,” who described the camps where they were kept “as absolute death traps—the worst I’ve ever seen,” though there was improvement later. Nations continues: “Refugees tell of

atrocities, rape, indiscriminate arrest, desecration of mosques and razing of villages by Burmese soldiers and local Mogh (Arakanese Buddhist) chauvinists,” circumstances far worse than anything reported from Vietnam. William Mattern comments in the same journal that the fate of the “200,000 or more Burmese Muslim refugees now in Bangladesh” can be traced in part to a civil conflict that erupted during World War II, when the British organized the Muslim community to fight the Japanese who were supported by the Burmese Buddhists in the Arakan mountains, leading to “one of the bloodiest communal riots in South Asian annals.”⁴ By the end of September, only about 250 of the refugees had returned home, according to unofficial reports in Rangoon, even though “in the squalor of the camps on the Bangladesh side, a return to their small farms and shops in Arakan—however impoverished—must have some attraction even for the downtrodden Muslims.” Informed observers believe that “certainly, someone put fear into the hearts of the Muslims of Arakan—and is keeping it there.”⁵

These 200,000 refugees of April-May 1978 were not totally ignored in the U.S. press. On May 1, the *New York Times* devoted 150 words on p. 13 to a report that 70,000 refugees had fled in three weeks, bringing “tales of torture, rape and robbery,” including more than 18,000 in the preceding 24-hour period. They fled despite the efforts by Bangladesh forces to seal the borders and turn back illegal immigrants. “One refugee asserted that the [Burmese] army had launched an operation to clear the border area of the Moslem community that was not originally Burmese.” Brief mention of this vast refugee flow also appears in subsequent stories. Humanitarians concerned with the suffering people of Asia, particularly the refugees from brutal atrocities and oppression, were clearly alerted to the existence of a major disaster, but the response was undetectable.

Returning to the London *Economist* report of June 17 on refugees, it points out further that 110,000 Chinese residents fled from Vietnam to China after the government cracked down on the black market and other illegal practices and nationalized businesses in the South; ethnic Chinese, the report notes, have been the most frequent “target of local hostility” in Asia, the most extreme example being the massacre in Indonesia in 1965-66.⁶ Since the fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh, the report continues, more than 200,000 refugees have fled from Indochina to neighboring countries—a substantial number, though, as we have seen, small by such historical standards as the American revolution, both in proportion to the total population and relative to the character of the conflict. In addition, some 150,000 Cambodians, including 20,000 ethnic Chinese, have fled to Vietnam.

The *Economist* does not mention the refugees who fled from the Philippines to Sabah at an estimated rate of 400 a day, some 140,000 by mid-1977, constituting 14% of the population of the Sabah. The Malaysian government has agreed to allow 90,000 to remain.⁷ Nor does it discuss the refugees fleeing from Indonesian terror in Timor—or according to the Western-approved version, fleeing from the fierce guerrillas who have “forced them” to live under their control—so that they can be “protected” by the Indonesians (see Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.4).

As for Vietnam, “Most of the refugees appear to come from middle-class backgrounds or better, and they believe, with some justification, that they have the most to lose under communism.”⁸ “Fear of being punished for past actions or associations seems to be a factor as well” and “officials who have questioned thousands of refugees say that nine out of 10 identify a desire for freedom as the major factor in the decision to abandon their homelands.” Frederic Moritz comments that “the Vietnamese [in Thailand] are largely middle-class businessmen and former low-level employees of the Americans who say that they faced disruption, loss of freedom and income, and possible job discrimination if they had stayed behind. At the least, the Vietnamese refugees were former independent fishermen.” “Vietnamese refugees say those who fail in escape attempts often are punished only mildly with short terms in ‘reeducation camps’ or other less severe measures,” but the Laotian refugees, who “actively fought communist forces for more than a decade in collaboration with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency,” would presumably “expect far harsher treatment,” long imprisonment or execution. The Cambodians still in camps—over 14,000—“are a mix of farmers, students, military men and minor government officials. Skilled Cambodians such as technicians and physicians or those with money have moved on to be resettled.”⁹

A fuller account of refugees in Asia by mid-1978 would include the quarter of a million driven from their homes in West Asia by Israeli troops in March, 1978, after bombing of cities, villages and refugee camps with U.S. cluster bomb units¹⁰ and heavy artillery, among other devices, in attacks reminiscent of Vietnam: “concentrated and heavy firepower and air strikes to blow away all before them—be they enemies or civilians—in order to hold down their own casualties,” leaving “a broad path of death and wide-scale destruction” with “hardly a town...left undamaged” and some “all but totally flattened by air strikes and explosive shells”; “the scope and sweep of the damage here makes a mockery of Israeli claims to have staged surgical strikes against Palestinian bases and camps.”¹¹ These quarter-million recall the 700,000 who fled (about half of them expelled,

according to conservative estimates by such pro-Israeli scholars as Nadav Safran of Harvard) in 1948, the 400,000 who fled or were expelled in 1967, many of them long after hostilities ceased, the one and a half million driven out of the Suez region by Israeli bombing during the 1970 “war of attrition,” and many others, including the former inhabitants of the Jordan Valley, cleared by force in 1969-70. Apart from those simply expelled by force, as in South Lebanon, there are the many who are escaping from the occupied West Bank, where the rate of emigration sharply increased to more than 17,000 in the past two years.^{[12](#)}

By the latter part of 1978, we may add several hundred thousand Maronites driven from Lebanon by Syrian bombardment, added to the earlier Lebanese Muslim and Palestinian victims of Syrian force as Lebanon is further dismembered by civil strife and foreign invasion and intrigue too complex and remote from our focus here to receive a proper discussion. The *Economist* (7 October 1978) reports a Lebanese government estimate of 600,000 exiles, about half of them Maronite, in addition to hundreds of thousands of refugees within Lebanon.

The refugees in Asia and Africa by no means exhaust the grim story. In Volume I, we discussed the massive flight from U.S.-backed terror in Latin America: an estimated half million from Uruguay, perhaps 700,000 from Bolivia, many more from the other subfascist states. Keeping just to 1978, in September more than 16,000 refugees fled Somoza’s terror to neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica, joining the 100,000 Nicaraguan exiles already living in Costa Rica, earlier victims of oppression in a country long favored with the benign attention of the United States.^{[13](#)} These refugees have evoked no more interest in the United States than the hundreds of thousands fleeing Burma, the Philippines, Zaire, or other non-Communist states. Attention is reserved for refugees from Indochina. Editors and columnists plead for greater concern and aid for refugees and international condemnation of the repressive policies responsible for their flight, referring solely to the refugees from Indochina—and not calling for measures to alleviate the harsh conditions in Indochina that are surely a direct reason for the flight of refugees and also a factor in the institution of the repressive policies that so concern U.S. humanitarians. Discussion of the U.S. contribution to the plight of the refugees or of the vast flow of refugees elsewhere would simply not serve the needs of Western ideology at this moment. Consequently, these topics merit no comment or concern. The Social Democrats, USA, publish full-page advertisements in U.S. journals calling for “compassionate action” to help the Indochinese refugees, signed by a wide range of people including some of the

most extreme and vocal apologists for U.S. aggression and terror in Indochina. Their compassion, however, is restricted to “Indochinese Refugees” and the statement makes no mention of any “compassionate action” to help overcome the consequences of the U.S. war.

By late 1978, the refugee flow from Indochina had reached quite substantial proportions. According to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, over 71,000 had successfully escaped from Vietnam by sea since April 1975¹⁴ and many more undoubtedly died in escape attempts, in addition to the ethnic Chinese who fled by land. In a speech before the Boston World Affairs Council, Richard Holbrooke of the State Department reported that in October 1978 “a record 10,000 ‘boat people’ landed in Southeast Asian countries. In the first two weeks of November an additional 10,000 landed in Malaysia alone...fleeing unbearable conditions in their home countries.” This “dramatic flow of refugees,” most of them ethnic Chinese, “could be highly damaging to the emerging stability of Southeast Asia.”¹⁵ Apparently the flight of 200,000 Burmese Muslims to Bangladesh in April-June 1978, more than 18,000 in a single day, was not “dramatic” enough to have reached the attention of the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, just as the flight of 140,000 Filipinos failed to reach this threshold. Among the refugees in Latin America there are also “boat people.” For example, 1,000 refugees from Haiti who “voyaged 800 miles in flimsy sailboats to Florida, where they received harsh and discriminatory treatment by Immigration and State Department officials.”¹⁶ These refugees fled from oppression and torture in the subfascist U.S. client with the lowest living standards in the hemisphere.¹⁷ “No rationale has been offered,” Gollobin continues, for treating the Haitian “boat people” differently from the Vietnamese and Cubans “who have been given asylum as a group.” The rationale, however, is obvious enough. As in the case of 140,000 refugees from the Philippines or a quarter of a million refugees from Southern Lebanon, the Haitians are not fleeing from “Communist tyranny,” but rather from “unbearable conditions” in a client state, or the acts of a friendly ally, and therefore merit no special concern.

In addition to their unwise choice of oppressor, the Haitian boat people have another strike against them. The *New York Times* reports that there are some 15,000 Haitians in the Bahamas seeking refuge in Florida, which has “raised fears here that the poor on other islands in the Caribbean may also risk the dangers of the open sea to get a legal foothold in Florida.” This is another reason why “only 26 Haitians have been granted asylum since 1972, the year when the rotting fishing boats made their first landings on Florida

beaches.”¹⁸

Fear of inundation by the poor and oppressed of the world can occasionally be relaxed, for example, when seasonal workers are needed in the Southwest or when some political capital can be gained by a demonstration of our humanitarian concern for victims of Communist tyranny—particularly when they are “orphans” (see chapter 2, note 17). But the Haitian boat people do not meet these conditions: “Now, as a signal to the rest of the world that just being poor is not enough reason to sneak into the U.S., federal officials are beginning a crackdown aimed at catching Haitians who have entered the U.S. illegally and sending them home” to the “poverty and repression” from which they have escaped.¹⁹ Some 1,200 arrived from November 1977 to mid-1978, including “boat people” who spent weeks at sea in sinking craft and were arrested on their arrival—if they made it.²⁰ But the State Department denies that they will be in any danger if returned to Haiti, and a spokesman for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services cited by Robert Press assures us that “the entire effort is being made with full regard to the administration policy of human rights”—which is true enough, though not exactly in the sense he was trying to convey.²¹ Temporary work permits that had been granted for 3-4,000 Haitians are being revoked. Some officials and one church in Miami, Robert Press reports, “have charged the U.S. with ‘racism’ for turning its back on the needs of the Haitians—a black people.” The fact that their oppressor is a U.S. client state is, however, sufficient to explain their treatment.

The ironies have not gone entirely unnoticed in the press. Karen DeYoung comments that “while the United States is acting to admit more Indochinese immigrants who wash ashore in Asia, it is attempting to deport other thousands of ‘boat people’ who have landed on southern Florida beaches from Haiti” (*Washington Post*, 22 December 1978). She notes that “the issue of the Haitian boat people has been simmering since 1972,” though “it was not until a 1977 Supreme Court case, however, that the Justice Department recognized the rights of the Haitians to INS interviews to judge their political asylum claims.” But the decision was virtually irrelevant. The INS Commissioner said in an interview that “practically none” of the 9,000 Haitians whose cases were being reviewed in Miami in December 1978 had been adjudged as meriting political asylum. Since the INS is no longer issuing work permits, “some Haitians are once again being thrown into jail while awaiting processing.” A committee of civil rights lawyers charged that “the INS rarely bothers to find out if the refugees are likely to be persecuted if they are forced to return to Haiti” (and, of course, no questions are raised in the case of flight from a Communist

state), and “deportation proceedings are initiated even before an interview is scheduled, under the 1977 Justice decision, to hear their claims for asylum.” The group “charged that the INS, in response to the vast and unexpired numbers of poor illegal Haitians, decided to begin throwing them out—primarily to avoid setting an encouraging precedent for other Third World illegals.” The London *Economist*, estimating the number of Haitians illegally in the United States at 30,000, most of them “boat people,” added that “as many as 150 Haitians are being dealt with each day [by INS], with only one or two minutes for each case to be heard,” while “spokesmen for the Haitian community in southern Florida wonder out loud why Haitians are not accorded the same treatment as thousands of Cubans and Vietnamese” (30 December, 1979).

The treatment of refugees in the mass media and by U.S. official action seems to depend, once again, on political-economic-ideological, rather than human rights considerations. The earlier classification of terror used in Volume I is fully applicable to the refugees as well: (1) benign (e.g., Burma, where no one cares); (2) constructive (e.g., Latin America, where the flow stems from actions serviceable to U.S. interests); (3) nefarious (Indochina, where the blame can be placed on the evils of Communism—overlooking the insignificant matter of the legacy of U.S. intervention). Refugees of the first and second categories can be shipped back to tyranny or left to rot in oblivion wherever they may land (as long as it is not here). But refugees of the third category call forth stirring cries of indignation, editorial denunciation, passionate speeches in the halls of Congress, outraged protest from spokesmen for human rights, and moving words—rarely deeds—of compassion in keeping with the lofty traditions of Western humanism.

In an editorial entitled “The Indochina Debt that Lingers,” the *New York Times* writes:

The case for American help to the refugees of Indochina continues to be self-evident. After our involvement in Southeast Asia, no debate over who owes whom how much can be allowed to obscure the worst horrors experienced by many of those in flight.

The *Times* recognizes no “case for American help” to the many hundreds of thousands of refugees elsewhere in Southeast Asia and beyond—indeed, one could hardly know of their existence from the pages of America’s leading newspaper—and most remarkably, recognizes no debt to the victims of U.S. barbarism who remain in their ravaged lands and who vastly outnumber the refugees. For the editors of the *Times*, the efforts of the Indochinese governments to rebuild are the subject only for censure, because of the suffering their people endure—a sure proof of Communist iniquity. The remark in the editorial about “debate over who owes whom how much” is, perhaps, an oblique reference to one of the sayings of President Carter, who, in the midst of a sermon on human rights,

was asked by a journalist about U.S. responsibility to the Vietnamese. We owe them no debt, the great humanitarian responded, because “the destruction was mutual,” as a tour through the bombed out ruins of San Francisco and the Georgia countryside will reveal.²² While this amazing statement was deemed worthy of no commentary in the Free Press, it is possible that it rankles a little at least.

We have already discussed the intellectual and moral standards by which the honesty of protest over human rights violations and concern for their victims should be judged.²³ Applying such standards, U.S. citizens concerned over the fate of refugees should distribute their efforts in accordance with the potential impact in relieving human misery. A refugee from Vietnam is no more or less worthy of concern, assistance, or admission to the United States than a refugee from Zaire, Burma, the Philippines, or Haiti. Articulate protest over the actions of U.S. clients such as Marcos or Suharto is far more significant in human terms—that is, in terms of potential benefit for victims—hence far more obligatory on grounds of moral principle than protest over acts or conditions in states beyond the reach of U.S. power. What we find, however, is that articulate opinion—at least, that part that is able to reach more than a tiny segment of the public—is focused almost exclusively on victims of Communist oppression, a concept that includes the rigors of life amidst the ruins, and is careful to evade the question of actions that would alleviate the conditions that are a primary cause for the flight of the refugees.

The *New York Times* has assigned one correspondent, Henry Kamm, to virtually full time coverage of the misery of postwar Indochina, though others too report frequently on this topic. No comparable concern is shown outside of Indochina. “The Pulitzer Prize for international reporting was won by Henry Kamm, chief Asian diplomatic correspondent for the *New York Times*, for his articles on the plight of the so-called ‘boat-people,’ war refugees from Indo-China.”²⁴ No such prize is, or will be offered for studies of the misery of refugees (or those not lucky enough to escape) from U.S. client states, or from countries such as Burma that have not been so ignoble as to defend themselves successfully from U.S. invasion. In fact, the Pulitzer Prize jury had recommended Les Payne of *Newsday* for the prize in international reporting for a series of articles on conditions in South Africa, but “the winner chosen by the [advisory] board was Henry Kamm of the *New York Times*, whose articles on Vietnamese refugees had been the jury’s fourth choice,” we learn in a brief AP report carried by the *New York Times* on April 22.²⁵ The Pulitzer Prize advisory board is, evidently, more finely tuned to the needs of contemporary ideology than the professional jurors.

In sum, the United States *ought* to have a real concern for the peoples of Indochina, victims of a long and agonizing U.S.-sponsored cataclysm. But as this concern has been selectively exhibited in the postwar period, the cruelties and hypocrisies of the entire Vietnam war intervention display themselves in new form. The main victims, the bulk of the rural population who remain in Indochina, are ignored, and the concern for refugees is so intertwined with ideological warfare and a rewriting of history that the humanitarianism is once again shown to be hopelessly compromised by political interests. The ghastly episode of the Vietnamese “orphans,” discovered at the last moment and spirited out in a brazen effort to gain public support for the war, was, regrettably, a microcosm of the continuing U.S. response to the war victims. The lack of any comparable concern for the vast flow of refugees from terror within the U.S. sphere of influence, or the victims of benign terror, also tells us a great deal about the power of political economy to twist human rights into such shape that its humanistic component is hard to locate.

Vietnam

In the preceding chapter, we discussed the highly selective concern over the plight of refugees, many of whom are first or second order victims of Western intervention (“modernization” or pacification). Deep concern is also voiced for those unfortunates who have not yet succeeded in fleeing from the rigors of Communism. True, things are perhaps a shade better than was predicted by those who invoked the near certainty of a massive bloodbath as justification for their support for continued U.S. intervention;¹ and now that we have looked briefly at a few moments of Western history, under circumstances incomparably more mild and favorable and with much less cause for revenge, one can perhaps begin to perceive the basis for such expectations.

One of those who confidently predicted a mass slaughter in Vietnam was the noted expert Patrick Honey, friend and adviser of Diem, former Reuters Saigon correspondent and Foreign Editor of the *Economist*, author of a book on North Vietnam published by the Center for International Studies at MIT, and a respected commentator on Vietnamese affairs—also a self-styled “pacifist” who urged such measures as bombing the dikes in North Vietnam as early as 1965. One of his more perspicuous insights was that after a Communist victory

All believed to pose a threat, real or potential, to the Communist regime will be killed at once, and some of the remainder may be permitted to postpone execution as long as they continue to work as unpaid slave labourers. Calculated on the basis of past Communist deeds, and given the size of South Vietnam’s population, the minimum number of those to be butchered will exceed one million and could rise to several times that figure.²

In fact, the predictions of Honey and other comparable experts have not been fulfilled. There has been no credible evidence of mass executions in Vietnam, certainly nothing similar to what happened in France or perhaps even Japan after World War II, to cite two examples discussed above where the provocation was far less. But some of the measures enacted by the victors have nevertheless been invoked to demonstrate both Communist perfidy and the “double standards” of those who opposed the war. One example which provides a good insight into the practices of the Free Press is a front-page story in the *New York Times* by their Asia specialist Fox Butterfield, which includes the following “information.”

The Communists say they have also forced 260,000 Montagnards, the nomadic hill tribesmen in the south, to settle down in the last three years. Similar efforts by South Vietnamese regimes before 1975 drew angry protests from Americans opposed to the war.³

Since it seemed to us unlikely that the Communists would say that they had “forced”

montagnards to resettle, and since we recall no “angry protests” over earlier resettlement of montagnards, we wrote Mr. Butterfield to inquire as to the source of his information. He was kind enough to respond (which is unusual; most efforts to track down the source of what appears in the press are unavailing). In a letter of 12 June 1978 from Hong Kong, Butterfield cites as his source a 19 March report by the Vietnam News Agency which he quotes as follows:

300,000 former nomads in the central highlands provinces of Gia Lai—Cong Tum, Dac Lac and Lam Dong have now settled and together with soldiers and pioneers from the plains, cleared hundreds of thousands of acres of virgin lands and built hundreds of new economic zones.

He also cites “a Tass dispatch on 25 January giving figures for both north and south, with the specific figures of 260,000 for the south.”⁴ Note the way this information has been transmuted into a “forced” resettlement as it becomes a feature story in the *New York Times*.⁵

With regard to the protests by Americans, Butterfield writes: “I can only tell you that during more than two years as a correspondent in Vietnam, I often received letters from American friends suggesting I write articles detailing U.S. and South Vietnamese measures to compel the montagnards to settle down...In fairness, if such a standard was applied to [the actions of the Diem, Khanh, Ky and Thieu governments], it should be maintained now for a communist regime.”

This response gives an interesting indication of the kind of thinking that informs the news columns—not to speak of the editorials—in the Free Press. First, we may ask whether letters from friends are correctly described as “angry protests from Americans opposed to the war” and provide a sufficient evidentiary basis for characterizing and defaming a mass popular movement. Second, note the assumption—based on no cited evidence—that the Communists have *compelled* the montagnards to resettle. Note finally the belief that fairness requires that “Americans opposed to the war” now direct “angry protests” against the Vietnamese Communists.

Even if Butterfield had some factual basis for his assertions, consider the standards he invokes in his news column. The Vietnamese have resettled 300,000 montagnards by means that he does not know. In comparison, the U.S.-imposed government claimed to have moved no less than one third of its population to “strategic hamlets” by the summer of 1962 to “protect” them from the Communists, who, according to U.S. officials, had the support of about half the population while the U.S.-imposed regime could claim only minimal popular support. This was undoubtedly a forced relocation, as contemporary reports and later studies make very clear.⁶ The montagnards were particularly hard hit by

the forced relocation programs. Dennis Duncanson of the British Advisory Mission, a passionate supporter of the U.S. intervention and now a widely respected commentator on Indochina, reports without critical comment that the policy of random bombardment of villages in “open zones” was the “principal cause of a huge migration of tribesmen in the summer of 1962,” citing estimates from 125,000 to 300,000.⁷ The *Pentagon Papers* cite intelligence reports on “indiscriminate bombing in the countryside” which is “forcing innocent or wavering peasants toward the Viet Cong” and on the flight of 100,000 montagnards from Viet-Cong controlled areas “due principally to Viet Cong excesses and the general intensification of the fighting in the highlands,” noting again “the extensive use of artillery and aerial bombardment and other apparently excessive and indiscriminate measures by GVN military and security forces...”—a more plausible cause for the flight than “Viet Cong excesses,” a phrase that was very possibly added as a reflex in the typical ideological style of intelligence reports. A CIA report of July, 1962 mentions “extensive relocation Montagnards” allegedly resulting from fear of Viet Cong “and new found respect for power GVN has manifested bombing attacks and use helicopters.”⁸ Recall that U.S. pilots were flying some 30% of bombing missions by 1962 and that all the equipment of course was supplied by the United States to the forces it trained and organized.

The impact of these murderous programs on the montagnards then and in subsequent years was severe. Gerald Hickey, who worked with montagnards in close association with U.S. government agencies for many years, wrote in 1973 that “in the past decade at least 85 per cent of these [montagnard] villages for one reason or another have been relocated, and whole ethnic groups have been moved out of their traditional territories.” While he is a bit coy about the reasons, other sources, such as those just mentioned, make them clear enough. He reports, that according to Saigon officials in the Ministry of Ethnic Minorities, 200,000 of 900,000 montagnards perished during this grim decade. And at least 120,000 “are crammed into dreary and inadequate refugee centers” where they are shattered and demoralized. Most of their territories were then under NLF-NVA control “and the South Vietnamese out of fear of losing control of population prefer that relocated montagnards remain where they are,” in the refugee centers. Hickey concludes that “there may be a glint of hope in reports that in some of the Communist controlled areas montagnard refugees are being returned to their former sites to rebuild villages. If this is so it could mean the salvation of the montagnard way of life, particularly a restoration of their self-sufficiency and with it their dignity.”⁹

Other Americans have also observed their fate. Earl Martin describes the situation of

hundreds of montagnards swept up along with 7,000 Vietnamese farmers in OPERATION MALHEUR, sent to a camp where “camp life for the tribal people looked less like integration than genocide.” In fact, “gradually they started to die off,” pleading in vain to be permitted to return to their hills, even though these areas were being subjected to constant U.S. bombardment.^{[10](#)}

Contrary to the statement of the *Times* correspondent, there were, regrettably, few if any “angry protests” at the time of these programs by Americans opposed to the war.^{[11](#)} During the early programs, which were among the most savage, there was no visible peace movement at all. But even if there had been angry protests, as the facts certainly demanded, would it be proper to accuse such protestors of a double standard for failing to protest the current relocation of montagnards? Does fairness require that when a Vietnamese government relocates 300,000 montagnards (by means that are unknown), U.S. citizens must protest exactly as they did (rather, should have done) when the U.S. government and a regime that it forcefully imposed, armed and trained, bombed hundreds of thousands of montagnards into “protected areas” or drove a third of the population of South Vietnam into virtual concentration camps, surrounded with barbed wire and controlled by police? That is an odd standard of fairness. By honest and moral standards, protest by U.S. citizens would be directed primarily against the United States and its clients, even if there were some remote degree of parity in the measures undertaken, for reasons that we have already discussed (cf. Volume I, chapter 1, section 16).

In fact, there is a clear case of “double standards” illustrated here, quite apart from the falsification of evidence in the *Times* story. The *Times* did not protest, either editorially or in its constant editorializing in news reports, when the United States and its client regime drove hundreds of thousands of montagnards from their homes by “random bombardment” or conducted the forced resettlement programs of 1962-1963, or even when it later carried out its massive programs of “forced draft urbanization” by bombs and artillery. Occasionally the *Times* would complain that the programs were not efficacious or well-designed, but we recall no *principled* protest over this or other aspects of U.S. aggression in Indochina. And as we have seen, at the war’s end not only the *Times* editorial writers but also their most outspoken doves saw the war only as a blunder. In his news report and the attitudes that lie behind it, Butterfield exemplifies once again the typical hypocrisy of the media, raising a moral issue which takes the form of a criticism of alleged double standards on the part of others, but quite incapable of perceiving the real double standard to which the *Times* consistently adheres; or better, the single standard of

service to the basic principles of the state propaganda system.

In the same news story Butterfield reports that Vietnam plans to resettle 10 million people, one-fifth of the population, in the next 20 years. “In its scope and severity, Hanoi’s plan dwarfs the forced evacuation of refugees during the Vietnam war.” He criticizes a Vietnamese spokesman for having “made no reference to the cost in human terms of moving 10 million people from one part of the country to another and from their accustomed lives in the city to uncleared land in the countryside.”

Assuming that in this case the *Times* has some evidence for what it reports, consider the judgments expressed in this news story. Would the resettlement of 10 million people in 20 years dwarf in scope and severity the U.S. program of *bombing* approximately the same number of people into U.S.-controlled urban concentrations during the 1960s? It is quite important to recall that contrary to much current propaganda, these programs of forced relocation, which in fact displaced some 10 million people in the South according to the representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (see below, p. 82), were consciously designed to drive the rural population to the U.S.-controlled cities, a fact obvious enough from their predictable effect, and in fact were explicitly recommended for this purpose.¹² Furthermore, as we have already noted, all competent authorities agree that a program of resettlement is an absolute necessity if the country is to survive, a point to which we will return. What evidence does Butterfield adduce, or have, that the specific program to which he objects is an improper one, given the clear necessity for massive resettlement? The comparison to violent relocation by a foreign invader in an effort to undercut the social base of a popular resistance movement is truly astonishing.

What of the failure to refer to “the cost in human terms” of moving people from “their accustomed lives in the city” to “uncleared land in the countryside”? Butterfield evidently wants us to assume that the Communists, with their customary cruelty, are simply dismantling the cities where people live in comfort and sending them to uncleared land (in preference to the cleared land that otherwise awaits them?). He himself acknowledges factors that make this utter nonsense.¹³ The “accustomed lives in the city” were sheer hell for vast numbers of victims of U.S. savagery, while those more favored could hardly maintain their “accustomed lives” after the collapse of the totally artificial foreign-based economy and must turn to productive work, unless there is to be mass starvation. That much is elementary. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the Vietnamese are purposely sending urban residents to “uncleared land” out of some peculiar form of malice. Such evidence as exists, quite apart

from mere common sense, suggests that they will attempt to create a viable economy self-sufficient in agriculture. All of this is obvious, except to correspondent-editorialists in the U.S. propaganda institutions.¹⁴

It is interesting to compare the *Times* analysis with that of Nayan Chanda (see footnote 4), based on long familiarity with the region and a recent visit. Like the *New York Times*, Chanda discusses the 50,000 “functionaries and political personalities of the former regime, civil and military” in reeducation camps,¹⁵ the sometimes troubled accommodation of the bitterly anti-Communist Catholics to the new regime and the conflicts between certain segments of the Buddhist community and the Communist authorities, the discontent and suffering of urban residents of the South who blame the Communists for the radical decline in living standards for the bourgeoisie when the U.S.-based economy collapsed with the U.S. withdrawal, and the problems of corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. As distinct from the *Times* and other U.S. media, he also outlines the background and context of what is happening in Vietnam and discusses in some detail the careful and “progressive” measures that are being taken by the regime to try to deal with the awesome problems of “reconstructing the socio-economic structures ravaged by two decades of separation and war.”

In the South, Chanda writes, the security situation is “much improved” over 1976, with no armed military patrols in Saigon and no military in evidence on the road leading to the Mekong Delta or on bridges. Nevertheless, armed resistance reportedly continues in parts of the country, and he finds plausible the official explanation that “the principal reason” for detaining elements of the U.S.-backed regime “corresponds to the imperatives of security, the government wishing to assure itself, before freeing them, that those detained will have no opportunity to cause harm.”¹⁶ He reports the testimony of a recently released Thieu government functionary who says that most of his detention was spent farming or in political discussions after a three month study of “the history of the revolution and the causes of the American defeat.” The liberation of those with a “serious criminal past” will be delayed beyond the expected three years, Chanda believes, while bureaucratic inefficiency may delay the release of others.

There are 1.5 million unemployed in the South, according to officials whom Chanda quotes, including 300,000 in Saigon, most of whom had enjoyed, “thanks to the massive influx of American dollars, an easy life and a standard of living absolutely without relation to the level of economic development of the country.” According to a confidential report of the World Bank, the worst threat of famine in the South was overcome by imports from

the North and external assistance. Far from draining the South of resources, as the editors of the *New York Times* have claimed (see chapter 1, footnote 13), the Vietnamese authorities appear “concerned to avoid the collapse of normal living standards in Saigon” and continue to divert essential products to the South, including even gasoline for thousands of private vehicles, “to the degree that the standard of living in [Saigon] is higher than anywhere else in Vietnam.”

Chanda gives a sympathetic account of the efforts to residents of overcrowded urban areas to “new economic zones,” prepared for settlement by army units, groups of young villagers, volunteer students, and members of the Young Communist League. There were admitted errors in the early stages of the settling of Saigonese in inadequately prepared new economic zones, leading to rumors of “new Siberias,” but these appear to have been overcome, Chanda reports. He describes the significant improvements in a region that he had visited in 1976, then “an arid plain without trees” and now a flourishing state farm, with schools, nurseries, tractors, and bulldozers. The cited World Bank report praises the new economic zones and urges international aid, while the U.S. press, in contrast, prefers to deplore the cruel evacuation of the Saigonese from their “accustomed lives in the city to uncleared land in the countryside.”

Chanda also describes the slow and careful moves that the government is making to encourage cooperation among the individualistic peasants of the Mekong Delta and to increase food production, the introduction of double harvests, and “impressive projects” to improve the land as well as efforts to develop small-scale industry to offer needed goods to the peasants so that they will agree to send the agricultural surplus to the cities. As for the corruption, described with much glee by Western journals,¹⁷ he writes that it is “in a way an inevitable phenomenon after thirty years of sacrifice and privations,” particularly in Saigon where substantial quantities of imported consumer goods are still to be found, though the government, which has quite openly discussed the problem, is taking measures to overcome it not overlooking the severe temptations for a soldier who has been fighting in the jungle for ten years and would now like to send a small present to his wife at home.

This description, while not sparing in criticism, is radically different in character from the bulk of what is presented in the U.S. press in an effort to demonstrate Communist depravity. It even suggests that the United States might have some lessons to learn—lessons that might be applied in its Latin American domains for example—from people who entirely lack the resources of the world’s richest country and who are facing problems immeasurably more severe than those in the U.S. satellites.¹⁸ Or perhaps the lessons might

be applied in the outright U.S. colonies such as Guam, where, according to a report by Butterfield, Asian workers “have been systematically underpaid, physically abused and intimidated by threats of deportation if they complain—often, apparently, with the complicity of United States government officials”—the situation is “like slavery in the South before the Civil War,” says a Department of Labor official who adds that his life was threatened when he was sent here to investigate the situation.¹⁹

One might even be so naive, perhaps, as to imagine that the facts that Chanda reports might lead the *New York Times* editors, who are presumably aware of them, to reconsider their high-minded belief that “our Vietnam duty is not over,” referring solely to the “horror” of the refugees,²⁰ and to conceive of this lingering debt as encompassing also a response to the appeal of the Comsymps in the World Bank for international assistance for the resettlement projects within Vietnam.

The World Bank is not alone in recommending resettlement. “A vast resettlement of Vietnamese, away from the cities and back to the countryside, is likely to get under way soon—probably aided by United Nations-sponsored funds.”²¹ A UN report describes such mass population movement as a “top priority” if Vietnamese agricultural production is to recover. The head of the UN aid mission that visited Vietnam for a month in March, 1976 told a news conference at the UN in New York that “I am satisfied in light of my experience that coercion is not exercised.” He also expressed his opinion that those who crowded into the cities of the South during the war did not want to stay in the cities. In the North, he observed, “some villages have been totally erased from the earth—you have some cities without a house left standing.” He added that the Vietnamese had shown a “very friendly, constructive attitude” towards the UN mission and permitted them to travel freely. He urged an international aid program, to which Sweden and some other Western countries have already begun to contribute—but those who erased the villages from the earth have banned aid to the victims, or even trade.

The representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Alexander Casella, now a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment, gave his impressions of 18 months in postwar Vietnam in *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1978. This detailed report is rather similar in tone to Chanda’s, and again radically different from the stream of invective in the nation’s press. Casella concludes that “if one considers the material problems the country faces and the hatreds accumulated by 30 years of war, the potential for a major economic and human catastrophe [after the war] was enormous. The least credit that the leadership deserves is for having averted that catastrophe.” When the war ended, there was an “administrative

vacuum” in the South, and “northern officials had to be rushed to the south” along with “doctors, technicians, medical supplies, and fuel.” The reason for the administrative vacuum is simple: “The Saigon administration had dissolved, and the PRG did not have the manpower to take over.” In the early 1960s about half of the party members were in the South; by 1976, the proportion was less than one in six. Why had the proportion changed?

A major reason for the imbalance is the Phoenix program—the American euphemism for the system of assassinating South Vietnamese Communists—which, according to official Vietnamese sources, had about 100,000 victims. They were not merely party members, but in most cases experienced functionaries. In other words, the local administrative structure of the PRG was for all practical purposes eradicated, and in the last years of the war the operating life-expectancy of a Communist party cell leader in Saigon was not more than four months.²²

The Western press generally prefers a different interpretation of the northern takeover, as we have seen: “As soon as the war was over the NLF was discarded,” Martin Woollacott explains.²³ “In retrospect, it is clear that the NLF was never a true coalition of Communist and non-Communist forces, nor was it ever an independent southern entity.” His evidence is that the Communist Party revealed in internal documents that it hoped to control the Front, and the judgment of “most authorities” that “by 1966 the majority of key cadres were northerners” (that is, after ten years of savage repression, 4 years of U.S. bombing, and a year of full-scale military invasion with its awesome concomitants). Without a word on the methods that were used to destroy the NLF and the peasant society it had organized, Woollacott observes that the “revolutionary theory” of the NLF “in the end turned out to be wrong”: there was no general uprising or “negotiated coalition government” (which is true, given the U.S. refusal to implement the 1973 agreements; see chapter 1, section 1) but rather the war ended “by a massive conventional military campaign” (in response to U.S.-Saigon military actions, as is noted by every reputable observer) and now the Front “has been ceremonially laid to rest in Saigon” (having been decimated by U.S. terror). The omissions, here parenthesized, are revealing.

Casella goes on to describe the “shattered economy” of the South, an artificial U.S. creation, as well as “an exhausted North Vietnam, whose economy was just marginally self-supporting” having been reduced to the production level of 1955, and “now required to divert some of its functionaries to help govern the south, and to prop it up economically as well. The south, or what was left of it, had little to offer the north.”

Discussing the impact of the war, Casella writes that “between 1965 and 1975, some 10 million people were at one time or another displaced” in South Vietnam. By the summer of 1975, he writes, “it was clear that there was no economic alternative but to return to the

countryside for the five million displaced persons who had sought refuge in the cities and were now mostly unemployed.” Of these, two million were fortunate enough to be able to return to their original villages; “of the other three million, many had seen their villages destroyed and the land wasted.” These “would have to be resettled in ‘new economic zones’ (NEZs).” As for the resettlement program, “both for individuals and for the nation, there is no alternative.”

Early efforts at resettlement in NEZs were ill-prepared: “Hence, the NEZs unjustly acquired the reputation of an Asian Gulag, especially among the petty bourgeoisie from Saigon, who had always looked down on manual labor.” By the fall of 1975, he writes, the situation had been reassessed and a “pattern of resettlement established,” news of which had not reached the *New York Times* desk in Hong Kong, whereby the army corps of engineers first clears land, disposes of mines, builds access roads, some simple housing, and health facilities before settlers are brought in. Casella then describes some successful examples in extremely poor areas.

Is there coercion involved? “If forcing means at gun point, then the answer is an emphatic no. But it would also be incorrect to say that there is no pressure on the unemployed people of Saigon to leave for the countryside.” Explaining these pressures, he describes what Butterfield calls “the accustomed lives in the city” for the poor, who rarely arouse the compassion that beats so strongly in the hearts of Western commentators for middle and upper class collaborators with the imperial venture. Saigon’s fourth precinct “is one of the poorest areas in the city, one into which few foreigners ever ventured.” Situated in a swamp, “it is a maze of alleys in a jungle of dilapidated shacks made of corrugated iron and the leftovers from plywood packing cases.” Its population rose from 60,000 in 1960 to 200,000 by the war’s end, about half unemployed. “Resettlement of the displaced persons in the fourth precinct was given priority, and by the summer of 1977, 60,000 had already been moved to new economic zones in Long An²⁴ and Tay Ninh, the areas most had come from.” He quotes a member of “the people’s committee of the fourth precinct and a survivor of seven years in prison on Con Son island,” who claims “that we have more people who volunteered for resettlement than we can handle.”

The problem of resettlement also exists in the North, where “most of the populated areas along Route One [south from Thanh Hoa to the 17th parallel] looked like a lunar landscape, pitted with bomb craters for mile after mile;” some 2 million people were displaced in the North, he estimates, mostly from regions that were among the poorest in Vietnam.²⁵

The food crisis is severe because of the war. The land area under cultivation declined by almost two-and-a-half million acres “due to the exodus of the population” from 1965 to 1975. Furthermore, “Cratering also had a long-lasting effect on agriculture,” since the explosion compresses the earth so that the huge craters left have no excess soil for fill on the perimeter. As U.S.-financed fertilizer imports abruptly ended, new strains of “miracle rice” could no longer be used, leading to “a drop in productivity”—generally attributed in the U.S. press to Communist mismanagement and peasant discontent. Unusually severe weather has further hampered plans to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency by 1980, although the area under cultivation in the South has increased. Since Casella wrote, the worst floods in many decades have caused further devastation and misery.

Casella also discusses the “re-education camps,” which are “obviously not vacation spots” though “it has yet to be proved that they are as bad as the old prisons of the Saigon regime.” As for the men now returning from them, “considering the length of the war and the bitterness it engendered, they could hardly have hoped for better.” The incompetent U.S. evacuation effort, described in detail by CIA analyst Frank Snepp,²⁶ failed to evacuate “endangered Vietnamese” to the United States, “a solution that both they and the Communists would surely have found less burdensome.” The Hanoi leadership, Casella writes, “concluded that retribution *per se* carried no redeeming value” for the 1.5 million members of the Saigon army and civilians of the Saigon regime. For the rank and file, “re-education...usually meant only one or two days of lectures,” though “problems arose with what had been the hard core of the Saigon regime—the officer corps, police officials, and the like;” for example, those engaged in the U.S.-sponsored assassination campaigns, whose names were no doubt known to the victors because of the failure to destroy U.S. intelligence files (see Snepp). “For the former ruling elite, re-education became a far more complex and time-consuming process.” While trials “have a certain appeal to the Western mind, anyone familiar with Vietnam instinctively realizes that the last thing the individuals concerned would have wanted was a trial, which would have narrowed down responsibility and probably led to far heavier sentences” as opposed to the three to five year detention (approximately) specified by “official decrees.” It is likely that since Casella wrote, a combination of natural disasters and serious international complications involving China and Cambodia, and perhaps other factors, have seriously aggravated the internal situation.

Despite the rigors of the war, the regime “did manage to attain some significant, tangible achievements.” “Illiteracy was practically wiped out, and North Vietnam today probably has the most comprehensive primary education system and rural health program

in continental Asia,”²⁷ as well as “one of the most decentralized of the Communist economies, one in which considerable leeway is left to local authorities.” The current trend “is to try to duplicate this pattern at the level of industrial management,” with involvement of trade union and party representatives in a “search for an original type of Socialist management.” It will take a full decade, he believes, before Vietnam reaches “a point from which an economic take-off appears feasible” and the material and social damage of the war is repaired. “A full assessment of where Vietnam stands will have to wait until that day”—a day that could be advanced were the United States not bent on retribution.

Casella’s account, like Chanda’s, is supported by much direct evidence provided by Western visitors and analysts who have spent long periods in Vietnam, including postwar Vietnam in some cases; for example, the detailed and ignored study by Jean and Simonne Lacouture in 1976.²⁸ The most extensive and by far the most serious report of a visit by a U.S. reporter, Richard Dudman’s ten-part series in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, reaches quite similar conclusions: “After 30 years of war and only 2½ years of peace, Vietnam appears to have made a remarkable start at tackling the problems of peace.” He confirms that “the South appears to be a burden rather than a prize for Hanoi” and reports the view of “some of the best informed Western diplomats in Hanoi” that the shortage of Communist cadres as a result of Operation Phoenix and other U.S. terrorist programs remains a major problem in the South. Western diplomats report a net rice transfer from North to South in 1975 and 1976, but probably not 1977. The new Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) “probably is better for many factory employees and others now known as ‘workers,’” but “worse, at least economically, for much of the middle class and for many of the self-employed”—which is not very surprising, given the collapse of the artificial economy that was based on a foreign dole. For the time being, “South Vietnam has something of the feel of an occupied country,” Dudman writes. Unlike most U.S. journalists, Dudman describes the social and economic development programs undertaken to overcome the effects of the war and reports interviews with Ngo Cong Duc and other well-known non-Communist intellectuals who support the new regime, and are therefore blanked out of the U.S. press (see below). All in all, his report, with its professional character and integrity, stands in striking contrast to the exclusive search for negatives that is labelled “news about Indochina” in the nation’s press.²⁹

The liberal weekly *Newsweek* depicts events in postwar Vietnam in its issue of May 23, 1977. In the index we read:

Two years after the fall of Saigon, the unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam is still no worker's paradise. Nearly 100,000 former South Vietnamese soldiers and officials are suffering in 'reeducation camps' from which many of them may never emerge. With the economy in bad shape, hordes of city folk have been moved to 'new economic zones' in the countryside, which lack nearly all the comforts of home.

—such as the comforts of the fourth precinct in Saigon or the villages that have been erased from the map in the war always supported (sometimes with timid reservations) by *Newsweek* editors. The accompanying article gives no insight into why the economy is in bad shape; nor has *Newsweek* been noted for its sarcasm about the “workers’ paradise” in, say, the Philippines, South Korea, Guam, or much of Latin America, to mention a few cases where U.S. influence and control extends beyond two years and where instead of B-52 treatment the United States is supposedly *aiding* the population (see Volume I, chapter 4, however, for a discussion of the *de facto* impact of this “aid”).

The journal then presents a discussion of “Life in the New Vietnam,” revealing that two years after the Communist victory, there are still beggars, prostitutes, and black marketeers in Saigon; sure proof of Communist iniquity as compared with the benevolent humanitarianism of the United States, which would never tolerate such a scene in Saigon, Manila, Guam, or Santo Domingo—or Harlem. “Western intelligence reports and the tales told by refugees and foreign travelers paint a dreary picture of life in Vietnam.” They quote a Frenchman returning from Vietnam who reports the feeling in the country that “two years after the war is really too long for this sort of thing to go on,” referring to the reeducation camps but failing to offer a comparison to the warm and sympathetic treatment of collaborators by the French, or the British and U.S. reeducation camps and forced labor for POWs up to three years after the German defeat. (See chapter 2, section 2.)

Newsweek also describes the new economic zones to which city dwellers have been removed, deprived of “all the comforts of home”: “Many of these zones have already become rural slums of shabby huts inhabited by dispirited city people trying to coax crops out of marginal farm land. In many cases, the government has failed to provide the new farmers with seeds and tools.” In its sole reference to the war, *Newsweek* writes that “the war has left Vietnam’s economy in a dreadful state.” “The North Vietnamese, some residents of Saigon believe, are intent on leveling the economy of the once-prosperous south ‘to punish us’”—which is true; some residents of Saigon do believe this, in defiance of the facts cited above that are nowhere mentioned by *Newsweek*. Nor is there mention of the fact that the “once-prosperous south” (needless to say, the fourth precinct and its counterparts throughout the country deserve no mention) “was an entirely external, artificially induced phenomenon” (Casella) created as a service economy (complete with

hundreds of thousands of prostitutes, drug addicts, beggars and servants) for the benefit of the U.S. invaders and their local clients, which disappeared when “the economic crutch that had supported South Vietnam for the previous 15 years collapsed” in April, 1975 (Casella). The article also discusses Hanoi’s admission of serious managerial errors, corruption, black marketeering, and resistance. There is no mitigating word, not a mention of the past or continuing U.S. role.

Three accompanying pictures enliven the account. One is captioned “Lecture at a ‘re-education camp.’ Two years after the fall of Saigon, routine scores are still being settled” (so different from the U.S. practice, discussed in chapter 2, section 2). A second is captioned “Camp officers relax: Don’t spare the rod” (no rod is visible). The third picture shows rather well-dressed children holding agricultural implements under a red flag—for all we know, it might be a picnic. The caption reads: “‘New economic zone’: Hardship post for city folk.”

Small wonder that the same issue of *Newsweek* contains a letter from a reader defending Nixon, with the following comment: “We forgave the British, the Germans, and the Japanese, and are currently in the process of forgiving the Vietnamese. Doesn’t Richard Nixon deserve the same consideration?” Nothing could reveal the power of the U.S. propaganda system more persuasively than the fact that readers who gain their picture of reality from *Newsweek* and similar specimens of the Free Press can speak of our “forgiving the Vietnamese” for their sins against us. Perhaps there are also enlightened Germans who are in the process of forgiving the Jews.^{[30](#)}

A few weeks earlier the *New York Times* presented its lengthy feature analysis of the “painful problems of peace” in Vietnam, once again by Fox Butterfield.^{[31](#)} While “some progress has been made by the new Communist leaders in improving the lot of the 50 million Vietnamese,” nevertheless the general picture is one of unrelieved dreariness and oppression. “Northern soldiers and officials in Saigon have bought up or confiscated vast amounts of desirable goods and shipped them home,” one indication of how “the northern Vietnamese have tended to treat the formerly more prosperous South like conquered territory.” Another indication is that Hanoi has sent tens of thousands of teachers and officials to the South and has assigned a “virtual monopoly on key policy-making posts in the unified government” to northerners.^{[32](#)} No mention is made of the reasons for the shortage of skilled personnel from the resistance forces of the South, though it has long been obvious that these consequences followed directly from the success of the Phoenix mass murder program and Westmoreland’s killing-machine.^{[33](#)} Nor does Butterfield take

note of the efforts of the North to divert scarce and precious resources to the South to maintain the artificial living standards of those Saigonese who benefited materially from their association with the U.S. invaders.

The careful reader, however, will notice that something is amiss in Butterfield's account of how the North is treating "the formerly more prosperous South like conquered territory." An accompanying AP dispatch from Saigon reporting "a recent 1,000 mile trip from Hanoi to Saigon by road and air disclosed a still-spartan way of life in the North and a relatively affluent one in the South." From Hanoi southward down Highway 1 "the scene is one of furious activity" as "men and women work until after dark, bringing in produce or laboring in construction gangs building canals and dikes" or repairing roads and bridges ("Every bridge along the way was destroyed by United States bombing"):

In the North, where factories and brick kilns work around the clock, effort seems concentrated on industrial construction. In the South the real business is in the cities; Saigon, in particular, appears to be almost as active as it was before the Communist victory two years ago. While the bicycle prevails in Hanoi, which seems in some ways like a country town, motor scooters and cars still buzz through Saigon which still boasts bars and hotels as well as freewheeling markets...The people of Hanoi still live in a do-it-yourself society where nothing seems to be wasted, least of all time.³⁴

Returning to Butterfield's survey, he next turns to the "new economic zones" and the population transfers. Curiously, in this May 1977 article he gives exactly the same figures and projections (700,000 Saigonese relocated and 10 million to be transferred in the coming years, including montagnards) that inspired him to such denunciation and scorn in his May, 1978 article, discussed above. He writes that "700,000 people from Saigon, many born there, have been moved to 'new economic zones' to clear scrub jungle or uncultivated land." Compare the accounts by Chanda, the World Bank and UN officials, cited above. Butterfield states that "the Communists have defended the population transfers as natural and necessary since Saigon and other southern cities, in their view, were always artificial products of American military spending and aid." He fails to add that this was not only the Communist view, but the universal view among people with the slightest familiarity with the situation—and surely is his view too—nor does he note that Saigon and other cities were not just artificial products of "American military spending and aid," but also of programs of "urbanization" by massive bombardment and destructive ground sweeps designed to force refugees to urban areas, a fact worth mentioning in this connection, one might think. He cites Communist sources who claim that "almost everyone in...[Saigon]...was in an unproductive service industry," again failing to note that this is not simply a pretense of Communist officials, but an unquestioned fact. Casella estimates that "70 per cent of the economic activity in Saigon was service-oriented and

only 7 per cent industrial”—he is presumably not including the hundreds of thousands of prostitutes in South Vietnam, another product of “American military spending and aid,” nor those engaged in the drug traffic which had devastating effects in South Vietnam as a direct consequence of the U.S. intervention (by all accounts the drug problem was extremely limited before).

Butterfield goes on to say that “the Communists defend the sharp drop in Saigon’s standard of living as a progressive development, bringing its residents back to earth after a decadent flirtation with the luxuries of American consumer society.” Recall the facts: there was a sharp drop in standard of living for some Saigoneses. Hardly all, but as Casella notes, U.S. reporters rarely entered the massive urban slums of South Vietnam where refugees and others lived in swamps and tin huts. The drop was hardly a matter of Communist “choice.” Rather, it was an immediate consequence of the withdrawal of the U.S. crutch that had created an artificial economy in the South at the same time that U.S. force was inexorably destroying its agriculture and village life. Unless the U.S. taxpayer decides to continue flooding Saigon “with the luxuries of American consumer society,” a possibility that Butterfield does not explore and that has yet to be advocated editorially in the *Times*, it is a matter of dire necessity, as all serious observers recognize, to resettle the “urbanized” population on the land and turn them to productive effort. But of this there is no word in the *Times* retrospective analysis of “conditions in Indochina two years after the end of the war there.” Rather, all of the problems are the result of Communist policy.

Butterfield was a *Times* war correspondent in Vietnam and is certainly aware, as are the editors of the *Times*, that something more than Communist decision is involved in causing a situation in which “many Southerners feel a sense of hardship.” In an article of some 2,500 words, Butterfield scatters a phrase here and there that might recall to the reader some of the other factors. He speaks of the “substantial tracts of land made fallow by the war”—a phrase that would have made Orwell gasp. He reminds us that 80% of the population are farmers, which may stir some memories about U.S. programs undertaken to defeat the rural-based insurgency by eliminating its base, “urbanizing” the rural population. He notes that “large numbers of urban residents” are being resettled in the countryside, permitting a person familiar with elementary school arithmetic to conclude that large numbers of former farmers are being returned (or perhaps, perish the thought, allowed to return) to farms—to their own villages, where these still exist.

Butterfield informs us that “Saigoneses, with a few exceptions, did not support the Communists during the long war.” Surely Butterfield knows virtually nothing about the

attitudes of most Saigonese; for example, those driven into Saigon by U.S. military action from neighboring Long An province, where, as Jeffrey Race's study shows, the Communists had gained the support of the mass of the population by 1965. As we have noted, U.S. officials in the early 1960s estimated that about half the population of the South supported the NLF. A substantial part of that population was driven to Saigon and other urban areas. Did they still support the NLF? Is the estimate of U.S. officials, which we would expect to be on the low side, an accurate one? To answer these questions one would have to pay some attention to Vietnamese who were not associated with the U.S. effort. This, reporters generally failed to do,³⁵ though again there were noteworthy exceptions. The real source for Butterfield's judgment is suggested by the accompanying analysis, where he illustrates the attitudes of the "Saigonese" with a single example: the family of a colonel in the Saigon army, one of whose sons had been a major in the army medical corps and another a lawyer in Saigon, and whose daughter had been a "low-ranking employee in the Ministry of the Interior." It is perhaps less than obvious that an account of this "family's woes" serves adequately to illustrate the attitudes of "Saigonese," though it is not untypical of the Western concept of "Saigonese."

Butterfield notes the problems of writing about Vietnam, given the limited sources of information. Thus "there is little verifiable information on the new economic zones—no full-time American correspondents have been admitted since the war."³⁶ His conclusions about the "problems of peace" are therefore based on reports by "diplomats, refugees and letters from Vietnam." The same complaint appears in a more exaggerated form in an article a few months later by the *Times*' Pulitzer Prize winner Henry Kamm, who writes that "southern Vietnam has become virtually impenetrable by foreigners and only the Hanoi Government's picture of life in the reunited country is presented to the world" so that refugees "are the principal source of critical first-hand information."³⁷ While the pretense is useful for *Times* ideologues, it is far from true. As the editors could have informed their correspondents, the *New York Times* requested a report on a trip to Vietnam from the distinguished U.S. historian Gabriel Kolko, but refused to print it, and indeed refused to permit *Asahi* (Tokyo) to print it, presumably on grounds of its ideological inadequacies from their point of view.³⁸ Furthermore, while sources of information are no doubt restricted, there has been plenty of first-hand material in the public record since the end of the war. For example, there is the book by Jean and Simonne Lacouture, already cited, which appeared in 1976, and much else to which we return.³⁹ If *Times* correspondents choose to limit themselves to reports by refugees and selected diplomats, they merely reveal again their ideological bias, not the factual contingencies.

A look at the book by the Lacoutures (which, as noted, is far from uncritical) explains why they have been consigned to oblivion—on this matter; not in reference to Cambodia, as we shall see in chapter 6. They report that “the capitalist economy of the South was unable to solve the [agricultural] problems that socialist planning, with many more natural handicaps, has just about overcome in the North,” and they provide information and insight into the partially successful efforts made to change the society that was called “irremediably miserable” by the French specialist Pierre Gourou.⁴⁰ They also describe what Butterfield calls “the tracts of land made fallow by the war”—to be more accurate, in their words, the land with “its bridges destroyed, its trees mutilated, its leprous earth, its vegetation rendered anemic by defoliants, it is the antechamber of desolation,” deprived of its population “fleeing combat or forced by the Americans to abandon the countryside to be regrouped in strategic hamlets or the vicinity of the cities” (95, 195). Like all other competent observers, but unlike the U.S. journalists who enlighten the public here, the Lacoutures point out that “it was absolutely urgent to reinstall the peasants on their land,” referring to an estimated 8 million displaced by the war in the South (197). They visited several villages in new economic zones and spoke to inhabitants, for example, in the region of Cu Chi, “scalped by the war,” where “it is for the most part the former peasants who have returned” (200). Their conclusions are relatively optimistic: “the method seems progressive, based on voluntarism, taking account of the ravages provoked by malaria” (202). True, they are not “full-time American correspondents,” but it is unclear why their direct testimony lies beyond the pale, given Jean Lacouture’s long experience and distinguished record as a historian and journalist in Vietnam—or rather, it is quite clear.

The refusal to concede the existence of direct eye-witness reports from Vietnam enabled the *New York Times* and its colleagues to evade the question of the consequences of the U.S. war and the problems of reconstruction that face the survivors. It enabled them to avoid the thoughts aroused by such passages as the following:

The traveller returning to the South a year after liberation cannot fail to be surprised at the transformation of the countryside. The thousands of young volunteers and peasants who are busy constructing dikes in the villages of Song-My (where the My Lai massacre took place) to the sound of revolutionary music from loudspeakers, well symbolize the new epoch.⁴¹

Though one can imagine how brainwashed U.S. reporters would convey this scene, even if they were to concede its existence.

On the rare occasions when the devastating consequences of the war are noted, care is taken to sanitize the reports so as to eliminate the U.S. role. The *New York Times*, for example, carried an AP report from Manila (21 March 1976) on a World Health

Organization study, describing South Vietnam as “a land of widespread malaria, bubonic plague, leprosy, tuberculosis, venereal disease and 300,000 prostitutes...one of the few places on earth where leprosy was spreading and bubonic plague was still taking lives.” The WHO report states that “if the bomb-shattered fields are to be made fertile again, and the socio-economic conditions of the people improved, freedom from malaria will have to be first insured,” while in the North the main health problem is to reconstruct the 533 community health centers, 94 district hospitals, 28 provincial hospitals and 24 research institutes and specialized hospitals that “were destroyed during the war”—by some unknown hand. The sole mention of the United States in this grisly report is the statement that the United States has been invited to a meeting “to consider helping the two countries”—the “two countries” being North and South Vietnam; while the *Times* recognized the integration of East Timor into Indonesia in 1976 it had not yet recognized the unification of the “two countries” of Vietnam.

Since we owe the Vietnamese “no debt” because “the destruction was mutual,” as Mr. Human Rights has explained to his admiring audience,⁴² no help will be forthcoming from the United States to reconstruct the hospitals so mysteriously destroyed or to deal with the half-million drug addicts, the 80,000 to 160,000 cases of leprosy in the South, the estimated 5,000 cases of bubonic plague annually, or the rampant epidemics of tuberculosis and venereal disease reported by the W.H.Q.⁴³ Congress, as noted, has banned aid to Vietnam for its “human rights violations,” which so offend the U.S. conscience.⁴⁴ The United States was the only country out of 141 that refused to endorse a UN resolution urging “priority economic assistance” to Vietnam.⁴⁵ A request from Vietnam to the Asian Development Bank for assistance might take “quite a long time” to consider, according to the Bank’s President Taroichi Yoshida, representative of another country well-known for its “blundering efforts to do good” (see chapter 1, p. 17) in Southeast Asia. “Observers believed that Mr. Yoshida’s caution stemmed, in major part, from the reluctance of the United States to extend economic assistance to Vietnam until the political relationship between the two countries has been put on a normal peacetime footing”⁴⁶—a process allegedly impeded by Vietnamese cruelty in refusing to settle the problem of MIAs, the sole outstanding issue between the two countries.⁴⁷

So stern is U.S. moralism that even recipients of U.S. “Food for Peace” aid must refrain from assisting the errant Vietnamese. The government of India wanted to send 100 buffaloes to Vietnam to help replenish the herds decimated by the same mysterious hand that destroyed the hospitals, left the land “fallow,” and made Vietnam into a land of

widespread disease and suffering, but it was compelled to channel the gift through the Indian Red Cross to avoid U.S. retribution, since Food for Peace (Public Law 480) prohibits assistance to “any exporter which is engaging in, or in the six months immediately preceding the application for such financing has engaged in, any sales, trade or commerce with North Vietnam or with any resident thereof ...” while another clause bars “any nation which sells or furnishes or permits ships or aircraft under its registry to transport to or from Cuba and North Vietnam any equipment, materials, or commodities so long as they are governed by a communist regime.”⁴⁸

Returning to the pretense of the *New York Times* specialists that “southern Vietnam has become virtually impenetrable by foreigners and only the Hanoi Government’s picture of life in the reunited country is presented to the world,” there had been many other unnoticed observers who had visited Vietnam, beyond those already mentioned. For example, in an account of a visit by Inder Malhotra of the independent *Times of India*,⁴⁹ he notes that his plane to Hanoi was “packed with travelers of many nationalities—from Cuban to Japanese,” including one U.S. citizen leading a delegation sent to Vietnam by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and a number of Dutch journalists. But a look at Malhotra’s report of his visit quickly explains why it too, like those of the Lacoutures and others, must be consigned to oblivion. Malhotra emphasizes “the whore-like, parasitic mentality that the American years bred even among those South Vietnamese who had nothing whatever to do with the prostitutes and their pimps” (of whom there still remain “a staggering number,” though the Communists, he reports, are making impressive efforts to rehabilitate them and to cure the many dope addicts, preponderantly young boys and girls). “Most Saigonese would rather ‘make money’ than earn it. To them work is a dirty word; they would rather ‘do business.’” He reports that “the new regime, very sensibly, has decided not to use the big stick to combat this mentality.” Saigonese men and women who openly announce their opposition to the new regime also “confirm, on cross-examination, that despite their known dislike for the regime no one is hounding them out of the city.” He also contrasts the spartan existence in the North (where “there are no pavement dwellers...and no beggars” and there is general tranquility—“Late at night it is not unusual to see a lone girl or several reading under a street lamp in front of darkened houses,” just like New York) with the imported and artificial affluence of Saigon: “the contrast between the lifestyle of Hanoi and Saigon is so great that to go from the Northern metropolis to the Southern one is like leaving a monastery and plunging headlong into Hamburg’s red light district.” He also reports the ravages of the U.S. war.

Better, no doubt, to pretend that no foreigners can enter Vietnam.

The same considerations explain the nonexistence of Hugues Tertrais, who reported on his stay in Saigon where he was working “as a ‘cooperant,’ (a sort of French Peace Corps worker).”⁵⁰ Like all other direct observers, he discusses what he calls “the war’s most crippling legacy,” the artificial consumer-oriented “urban society based on ‘services’ and consisting largely of shanty towns,” which must be radically transformed and returned to productivity if the society is to survive. He reports that there is “complete religious freedom” and discusses the efforts to reconstruct the stagnated economy and the resettlement in new economic zones (“the system now seems to be running smoothly, in spite of a slight sluggishness resulting from the nonauthoritarian nature of the operation”), where “young volunteers accompany the migrants to give them a hand with the preliminary work, and the people’s army often makes lodgings available.” He quotes Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, a courageous U.S.-educated non-Communist dissident who was well-known to Americans in Saigon, who explains the effort “to promote ‘revolution in production relationships,’ ‘ideological and cultural revolution,’ and ‘scientific and technical revolution,’ which has a key role to play.”

Among others who have escaped the keen and inquiring eyes of the analysts of the *New York Times*, searching for every scrap of evidence about Vietnam, are several Canadian Vietnamese who have visited their native country. Father Tran Tam Tinh and Professor Tran Dinh Khuong of Laval University (Quebec), both officials of *Fraternité Vietnam*, reported on their visit to Vietnam in the summer of 1976 in *Le Soleil* (Quebec), January 7, 1977.⁵¹ Their impressions are rather like those of other direct observers, though in some respects more detailed. They describe the functioning of “solidarity cells” (social welfare groups in their view, though regularly described as agencies of state surveillance and coercion by the U.S. press); “solidarity workshops” organized by Catholic and Buddhist intellectuals in such regions as the “Iron Triangle,” devastated by U.S. terrorists, who say that they are volunteers; schools that engage the youth in communal activism and cultural events (which they witnessed); and so on. *Fraternité Vietnam* has also circulated a detailed report by Professor Tran Dinh Khuong on his seven-week tour, which included visits to industrial and artisans cooperatives, schools, hospitals, Catholic journals directed by priests and lay Catholics, churches,⁵² etc., in both North and South Vietnam, where he spoke with many functionaries, doctors, journalists, and so on. The major concern of his visit was to prepare for humanitarian assistance from abroad, and he ends his report by saying that “we will be happy to furnish additional information and explanations to aid

organizations that would like to participate in these programs.” Presumably he would also be pleased to offer further information to U.S. journalists concerned with fact rather than service to the state propaganda system, but the opportunity has evidently not arisen.

In a letter published in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (5 April 1977), the two Canadian Vietnamese visitors report that they were “each living with our own families” and “we wandered through the streets of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) and met with people of all social categories,” engaging in “discussion with many average and ordinary Vietnamese.” The fact is significant, given allegations featured in the *Free Press* to which we return.

Actually, even the careful reader of the *New York Times* will be able to ascertain that other sources of information do exist beyond those to which the *Times* analysts choose to restrict themselves,⁵³ and that they often give a picture that differs substantially from the dreary and dismal scene of oppression and misery that the *Times* specialists construct from their carefully selected sources. Kathleen Teltsch reported from the UN in New York that “Westerners who visited Vietnam almost two years after the end of the war report that agricultural recovery is progressing although rice rationing continues in both North and South,” referring to “separate groups of Mennonites and Quakers,” UN officials, and “a World Bank mission that spent four weeks assessing the economic situation.”⁵⁴ In paragraph 12, five lines are devoted to the report by the UN coordinator for rehabilitation assistance to Vietnam who “has said that significant progress has already been made but that reconstruction requirements remain vast.” In paragraph 7, Max Ediger, “a Mennonite social worker from Kansas who lived in Vietnam from 1971 to 1976,” is reported as saying that on his return to Vietnam “he was struck by the greening of the countryside, with areas once burned to the ground already turned into crop land.” The reader who may be interested in further details will not find them in the *New York Times*.

More attention is given to the failure of these Western observers to ask to see reeducation centers where “it has been alleged, the authorities have interned tens of thousands, including soldiers and supporters of the American backed Government,” posing a “human-rights issue” which “could loom large in President Carter’s consideration of relations with Hanoi,” the latter comment, typical Western cynicism. The response of the Quaker group to this charge is taken up under the heading: “Issue of Repression Bypassed.” The sole contents, under this heading, is a series of comments by Wallace Collett, a businessman who headed the Quaker mission. He reports that after travelling widely and “talking freely with Roman Catholic and Buddhist leaders, with intellectuals

and with Vietnamese ‘known over the years as people whose accounts were reliable,’” his group was convinced that accusations of widespread repression are untrue, though, as he said, “the Vietnamese make no apologies for holding some [former officers or officials of the Thieu government] and tell us they do so for offenses we’d consider treason.” Though the *Times* does not mention the fact, the group contained Vietnamese-speaking members who had lived and worked in Vietnam and met with non-Communist Vietnamese who had long been known for principled resistance to oppression.

It is interesting that this denial of repression by a group that specifically investigated it,⁵⁵ apparently relying on sources that seem reasonable enough, should appear under the heading “Issue of Repression Bypassed.” The explanation for this anomaly, surely, is that the conclusions reached by the visitors did not conform to the doctrinal assumptions that guide “news reporting” in the Free Press. Consequently, the editors simply lied about the contents of the story in the subheading and reporters made no further effort to determine to whom the delegation spoke and what these informants said—a matter of some interest, as we shall see—just as their account of general conditions has had no impact on reporting and analysis in the press and receives no more than passing mention in a context that suggests that it can be dismissed, in contrast to material that *Times* ideologues find more to their taste.

Since the United States is a Free Society, it is possible for the assiduous investigator to determine what the Mennonite and Quaker visitors discovered on their visit. Max Ediger of the Mennonite Central Committee, who worked in Vietnam for 5 years and remained for 13 months after the war, reported on his two-week visit in January, 1977 at a February 9 private conference that included members of the Senate and House.⁵⁶ Since the war’s end, this was the third Mennonite delegation to visit Vietnam, where the Mennonites had worked for 23 years. Ediger discussed the vast improvement in the educational system, in which he had been involved during his years in Vietnam, the efforts to find employment for urban refugees and their return “to their old villages in the countryside,” where “they continue to face many hardships.” It is not the “human cost” of the return to the land, which so preoccupies *New York Times* analysts, that Ediger reports, but rather the fact that “unexploded mines and other munitions litter their fields. Well trained military units first sweep the fields to try to clean them, but the farmers are still being killed.” In a letter of May 11, 1977 to *Worldview* magazine, Ediger reports that “an elderly member of a small congregation I occasionally attended returned to his farm after many years of living as a refugee” and “was instantly killed” when “he had only begun to turn over the fallow

soil...[and]...his hoe hit an M79 grenade.” Ediger heard many reports of similar deaths, and asks, reasonably it would seem: “If we produced the munitions, and put them there, do we not have a moral responsibility to take them out so the farmers can live?” The editors of the *New York Times* have yet to recognize such a responsibility, when they remind us that “Our Vietnam Duty is Not Over.”⁵⁷

Another problem that Ediger discusses in his testimony is “the vast destruction of soil and facilities inflicted by the past war,” a problem aggravated by the termination of U.S. aid (particularly fertilizers) and the necessity to do all work by hand. The church, he reports, “continues to function freely and normally,” and the government “has helped the Protestant church rebuild five of their structures destroyed by bombing in Da Nang. “Saigon is still suffering from major over-population and other war-related problems,” but “one can sense a certain feeling of relaxation among the people which was not there during the war.”

In his letter to *Worldview* Ediger adds further information. He visited a Buddhist seminary that had recently opened in Hanoi to train monks “for service in the numerous pagodas throughout the country,” where Buddhist scriptures were being translated from Sanskrit to Vietnamese “so that it will be available to all Vietnamese.” He also “met several old friends who, because they were officers in the old army, spent nine months in re-education camps. They made no mention of torture and mistreatment” but “rather talked about learning how to work with their hands” and said that they had learned “about the new economic and social system they were living under. One young doctor, after completing his reeducation course, was made director of a drug rehabilitation center near Saigon.” A Protestant church rebuilt with the assistance of the government was dedicated on Christmas day; it had “received a direct hit from an American bomber in 1971 which resulted in the death of 80 Christians who had taken refuge there.” He also visited badly-needed development projects in the countryside and “programs set up to help former prostitutes and drug addicts receive training so that they could re-enter society as productive members of that society rather than as outcasts.”

Ediger does not doubt that there are serious human rights violations in Vietnam, and is aware that his tour undoubtedly was restricted. But he rather gently makes some important points: “Unless we accept the fact that we too are violating rights in Vietnam, and strive to correct that, we lose our basis for speaking about others’ possible violation of human rights...Is it not the right of a human being to be able to return to his/her farm and till the soil without the threat of being blown to bits by an M79 grenade or a claymore mine?...If

we helped destroy [hospitals and schools], are we not violating the rights of the Vietnamese people if we refuse to help them rebuild those structures?” These questions are foreign to moralists in the Free Press.

Beneficiaries of the Freedom of the Press can also learn about the Quaker visit that was so quickly dismissed by the *Times* (see p. 100 above), which included two members fluent in Vietnamese, Louis Kubicka (on the staff at AFSC’s Quang Ngai Rehabilitation Center from 1967-1971 and then AFSC representative in Laos) and Sophie Quinn-Judge (AFSC Saigon Representative for 1973-1975 and then co-director of the Southeast Asia Seminar Program).⁵⁸ The Quaker group travelled by road from Da Nang to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). The “most ambitious single reconstruction effort” they visited was a dam and dike near Quang Ngai, destroyed by the United States in an area that was later subjected to some of the most brutal operations in the war.⁵⁹ In Hanoi they met Jean-Pierre Debris, a Frenchman who had spent two years in Saigon’s Chi Hoa prison (his effort to reach the U.S. public in a subsequent tour here was virtually blanked out by the press) and now works with Catherine Debris at the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi. In the South they had discussions with many of the best-known leaders of the non-Communist opposition under the U.S.-backed regimes and renewed acquaintances with staff at the AFSC Quang Ngai clinic. Their account of a country rebuilding under the miserable conditions left by the United States is similar in tone and content to other eyewitness reports that we have discussed, so we will not proceed to review it.

Recall that the *Times* did report that the Quaker delegation had met well-known non-Communists in the South who had denied reports of widespread repression, but made no effort to discover the contents of these discussions; nor did other mainstream journalists to our knowledge, despite (or more accurately because of) the obvious significance of this material for anyone concerned with the facts. Ly Chanh Trung, who had been a leading spokesman for the non-Communist opposition under the Thieu regime, took pains to deny reports of repression, asking the Quaker delegation to convey a personal message to antiwar activists whom he knew in the United States:

We here are among the people who have been struggling for human rights in Saigon. If a violation of human rights occurs, we ourselves will raise our voices. We will not wait for our friends from abroad to raise theirs. When we were struggling for human rights here we saw that all the so-called human rights related to basic rights—not personal rights, but national rights: independence and freedom of the nation. If you don’t have these rights, you don’t have any rights whatsoever... Socialism can guarantee the most basic of human rights, and guarantee them for everyone. These are the right to live, the right to have work to do, the right of health protection service, the right to education, the right to build a better future, not for myself alone, but for all the people. These rights are not guaranteed by a capitalist society.⁶⁰

He went on to deny that the reeducation camps “have the purpose of revenging or

killing [officers or high-ranking servants of the old regime] gradually.” Both he and Ngo Cong Duc emphasized that there was much bitterness after 30 years of war and that “now the problem is how to have people live with one another, be reconciled to one another, and to understand one another.”^{[61](#)}

It is conceivable that these courageous human rights activists, non-Communists who were well-known to Americans in Saigon (the press included) and who struggled and suffered for many years, are now so ignorant or so terrorized by the new regime that their reaction can be dismissed. Or it may be that their voice is as important now as it was under the regime of U.S.-imposed subfascism. A free and honest press would present the evidence, permitting readers to come to their own conclusions. But the U.S. press reacts quite differently. There is no mention of the views of the leading non-Communist oppositionists, and even a passing reference to the fact that they had been in contact with Americans who had known them in the past appears only under the heading “Issue of Repression Bypassed.”

The Third Force leader who was best-known in the West was Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, who had attended Columbia Law School and was the founder of the Women’s Movement for the Right to Life, was imprisoned and tortured by Thieu for her courageous opposition to his despotism and released only after a widespread international protest, and is now a Member of Parliament. She met with a Swedish delegation led by Birgitta Dahl, a Social Democrat MP, on February 15, 1977.^{[62](#)} In this statement she reiterates that “I am *not a communist*” (her emphasis) and recalls the brutality and repression under the U.S.-imposed regime, which had jailed her four times for a period of about 5 years. She too strongly denies the charges of violation of human rights and “the attacks coming from the U.S. imperialists through the naive actions of good people,” referring to a petition signed by former antiwar activists that was featured in the *New York Times*.^{[63](#)}

She asserts that:

The great majority of the people who were forced to serve the puppet regime are considered by the revolutionary government only as victims. But if these people are to live in peace and true democracy, we could not tolerate traitors who committed monstrous crimes and still continue to be the instruments of imperialism—and we give this small minority no opportunity whatsoever to sabotage the wise policy of reconciliation and the huge task of reconstruction after so many years of a war we never wanted.

She calls upon people who have protested human rights violations in Vietnam to recognize that U.S. leaders “need to invent all kinds of stories to destroy trust” and “to support our post-war struggle, for our legitimate right to be a member of the United Nations, to take up the new challenge of our times.”

Again, her reaction would seem to be of some significance in the light of her long and courageous struggle as a leader of the non-Communist opposition to the client regime imposed by U.S. force. Perhaps she too has been intimidated or deluded. Readers of the U.S. press might judge for themselves, given the opportunity.

To be precise, Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh has received some press coverage. A report by George McArthur, formerly a war correspondent in South Vietnam, was devoted to an article of hers that was carried by Hanoi Radio in March, 1977.⁶⁴ The topic of the report is the scope of imprisonment in re-education camps. “The strongest hint about the numbers of South Vietnamese in camps indicated a minimum figure of about 110,000,” McArthur writes, adding that “in the view of refugees coming from the South, this estimate is ridiculously low.” How does McArthur arrive at this figure? His source is the article by Ngo Ba Thanh, who, he writes, was “the most persuasive spokesman advanced by North Vietnam” in their response to criticism from the United States (in which they follow “the Moscow line in attacking Carter’s internationalist approach to human rights,” which this correspondent, like most of his colleagues, does not perceive as something less than “internationalist”). She was, he adds, “in the forefront of antigovernment demonstrations in the South” and is now “one of the few Southerners who have attained or maintained influence with the Communist regime since Saigon’s fall.” In her article, she “extolled Hanoi’s lenient attitudes and went on to say,

Before returning to normal life, prolonged reeducation will be necessary for some 5 percent of utterly degraded former members of the puppet army and administration, such as members of the Green Berets, the Rangers, the paratroopers, marines, policemen, prison guards, district officials, village chiefs, and secret agents who were trained by the United States.”

McArthur interprets the alleged comments as implying that 5 percent of the 1.1 million man army and police forces and the 100,000 civil servants will “be held for a ‘prolonged period’”—namely 110,000 people. (We take no responsibility for the arithmetic.)

The Quakers, Mennonites, reporters from the international press, Canadian Vietnamese Catholics, relief workers, UN officials, and others cited are not the only people who have been able to penetrate the “virtually impenetrable” barriers placed by the Hanoi government around southern Vietnam, compelling the *New York Times* to restrict itself to reports of refugees and selected diplomats. Well before Henry Kamm’s complaints, an extensive report was published of a visit by a Friendshipment delegation concerned with humanitarian aid to the South,⁶⁵ again reporting meetings with Ngo Ba Thanh and other Third Force leaders, and focusing primarily on economic and social reconstruction. Granted that these issues do not appeal to the U.S. press, still their report might have been

noted for the record.

A moderately enterprising reporter could have discovered numerous other sources. Consider for example James Klassen, who was engaged in relief and social services for the Mennonite Central Committee from October, 1972 until April, 1976, and who speaks, reads and writes Vietnamese fluently.⁶⁶ A devout Christian, he comments that “while not involved with business interests like so many French missionaries before them, American Protestant missionaries—except for a precious few—generally supported the U.S. political and military involvement in Vietnam.”⁶⁷ Klassen taught Bible classes throughout 1975. Contrary to many fears, he writes, “The government in Vietnam adopted a policy of religious tolerance and based on my experience I do not feel that there was any systematic repression of religion by the government.” Some churches are “dynamic and growing”; “The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (Protestant) continues to offer Bible correspondence courses and in fact advertised them in the *Tin Sang* newspaper,” a “rather independent daily newspaper” with the Catholic Ngo Cong Duc as head of its editorial staff. Former Mennonite schools continue to operate as before with basically the same personnel and the government now paying salaries that were formerly contributed by North American Mennonites. “Although the government in Vietnam has adopted a tolerant policy toward religion, there has been a de-centralization of power so that people down at the local level have quite a bit of control, more like the typical structure used to be,” so there may be considerable variation from place to place. Church attendance is high and religious books are widely available. A Buddhist nun and a (relatively conservative) Catholic priest were elected to represent Saigon in the National Assembly. Religious training centers maintain high enrollment. “Young people in Vietnam are typically full of idealism and enthusiasm, and now on their days off this is being channeled into constructive projects to help build their homeland, including digging canals and working alongside the farmers so that the country’s economy can be based solidly on agriculture once again.” Vietnamese Christians are coming to recognize that if the church is to survive, “we’ve got to make our religion attractive by the way we live” (a Vietnamese pastor in Saigon). A young Vietnamese-Protestant medical doctor, addressing “the young people who packed the large Tran Cao Van Church in Saigon” in February, 1976 as part of the lunar New Year festivities said that “Christians need to support and participate in the worthwhile programs of the government—building a new society, rebuilding our country, helping our people ...”⁶⁸

Or consider an Italian missionary priest, now in Hong Kong, who circulated privately an account of his 15 months after liberation in Vietnam where he lived in a small village in

the suburbs of Saigon with a small group of Christians called “the Missionaries of Vietnam.”⁶⁹ He felt “that what I was witnessing was the last stage of a real revolution, a long revolution that has freed the country first from the French and then from the Americans. This revolution was liberating the Vietnamese people from the control of foreigners and from all the problems they had brought along to Vietnam.” He explains why, with considerable personal detail. As for refugees, he expresses sympathy and compassion:

one must admit that those who are unwilling to live in a certain system have the right to be welcomed in other countries, of a type more suited to their taste. It is, nevertheless, terribly dishonest to make these refugees say, in the countries that have received them, those things that the welcoming countries strongly wish to hear.

A warning that is supported by the historical record; see the discussion of the Bryce Report, chapter 2, section 1. It is still more dishonest to proclaim that there is no information apart from the reports of refugees.

Many more examples may be added.⁷⁰ It is quite true that information regarding Vietnam is limited, and that much of what is available (apart from refugees), though by no means all, is derived from “guided tours.” But the limitations on the press are to a significant extent self-imposed, reflecting ideological constraints rather than the exigencies of reporting under difficult conditions.

The professional literature has also succeeded in escaping the unfortunate limitations on evidence that are bewailed in the press. For example, in the Canadian journal *Pacific Affairs*, Professor William S. Turley of Southern Illinois University, one of the small group of U.S. academic specialists on Vietnam,⁷¹ contributed a study of postwar Vietnam in which he made use of Vietnamese sources among others.⁷² The victors faced numerous problems, among them, “a near famine condition among the poor,” the collapse of the economy, and urban over-population. The war, he writes, “grossly enlarged the service sector of the economy, encouraged private consumption without corresponding development of productive capacity, exacerbated inequalities, and eroded social discipline.” He compares PRG and postwar programs with those attempted by the Thieu regime, concluding that the former have been far more successful and that “progress already made under the new regime must be considered all the more remarkable and the ultimate goal, if reached, an astonishing achievement.” He comments on the “even handed pragmatism” of the PRG and current programs, the “massive extension of popular participation, and maximum feasible reliance on voluntary compliance to bring about major social and demographic changes” including campaigns to assist the poor and in general ensure that “social values henceforth would be redistributed downward” through

the efforts of popular organizations “under the guidance of party cadres,” which he describes in some detail. Prominent anti-Thieu non-Communists, such as Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, have appeared in a leadership role in these efforts:

The principal reasons for so quickly developing these forms of popular participation were to build a social base where the revolution had had only latent or secret support, to gain access to the urban population in order to instruct it in the values and perspectives of the new order, to obtain popular assistance in the implementation of certain practical measures, and to isolate close associates or unrepentant supporters of the previous regime by organizing those who had been ignored or disenfranchised by it. In this mobilization of the urban population, the PRG has been successful to a degree that its predecessor, whose leaders assumed the cities were ‘secure,’ had never attempted to achieve. RVN governments had been preoccupied with the military conflict in rural areas and had neglected the cities, while the elitist and fractious opposition groups seldom engaged in urban ward-heeling. Ironically, many city-dwellers, probably the vast majority, now have experienced political participation and have been called upon to show active support for their government for the first time in their lives.⁷³

The urgently needed redistribution of population has achieved “notable results” though difficulties remain. “The primary candidates for resettlement were people who had been forced to evacuate their homes by US-RVN military strategy.” Turley stresses the voluntarism of the program that is “urbanizing the countryside as it decongests the cities,” a program “best understood *not* as a reversal of war-time flow of peasants to the cities (though this is one element) but as a movement of poor and unemployed city dwellers, some semi-urbanized peasants, from the city to the country,” escaping the “wretched living conditions” of many urban areas (“less prevalent in Saigon,” where “the proportion of war-time growth accounted for by in-migration was smaller than in other cities”). Interpretations such as this rarely find their way to a general audience.

What the press wants to hear, and hence publicizes widely, is such testimony as that of Nguyen Cong Hoan, to whom one full session of the June-July, 1977 congressional hearings (see note 70) was devoted. Hoan was a member of the National Assembly representing a South Vietnamese province before his escape in March, 1977, and is described in the hearings as a former member of the Saigon Assembly who “was known for his opposition to Thieu’s government.”⁷⁴ He gives a grisly account of “the suffering of millions of my countrymen,” and says that “given the new rule, many like myself come to better appreciate the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.” “All the basic rights are suppressed,” he reports. Specifically, all religions “are under intense persecution...There is almost no religious life left in the country...Most of the churches have been destroyed or requisitioned by the state and the few that are still standing are attended on Sunday by only a few older people...In the South the training to become monk or priest is expressly forbidden...Every religious library has been confiscated and the contents burned...All religious mass organizations are proclaimed to be illegal and forbidden to meet or carry

out activities...the Protestants in Vietnam also are persecuted and all the pastors are considered CIA agents.”

Furthermore, “individuals and political parties once involved in the preservation of democratic liberties in South Vietnam, even those closely allied with the National Liberation Front and the Provisional Revolutionary Government are behind bars.” A few “former so-called Third Force elements were voted into the National Assembly, for instance, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh or Professor Ly Chanh Trung, but these were elected more to deceive world opinion rather than anything else” and “they are totally helpless.” Similarly, Tran Quoc Buu, former head of the Vietnamese Federation of Labor, is considered by the Communists to be “one of the CIA bosses in Saigon”; whereas “formerly, all the [union] leaders were elected by the workers,” now the union “is totally created by the Communists.”

“No Vietnamese dares to talk to a foreigner unless he is given permission to do so.” Furthermore, “eliminations and killings have occurred on a widespread scale and under many forms, some so subtle that no outside observers can possibly detect,” including some 700 killed in his own province (see p. 118 below). Some people were buried alive or “eliminated after extremely atrocious tortures” while others “died in concentration camps.” The number of political prisoners is 200,000 at a minimum.^{[75](#)}

As for the New Economic Zones, they “are no better than prison camps...lands of exile that no one in his right mind would choose to go unless forced to do so.” They are far worse than the “agrovilles” or “New Life Hamlets” of Presidents Diem and Thieu (“people were never afraid to go there even during the war where there was still a good measure of insecurity involved”).

Hoan escaped when “I realized that their main policy was for the impoverishment of everybody so that they can use a Communist leverage on the people and try to dominate their thinking.” The government also plans “to exterminate land owners” either by “physical elimination” or imprisonment.^{[76](#)}

In the North, suffering is even worse than in the South. “Through my contacts with the people of North Vietnam I realized that they are also very dissatisfied with the Communist regime...many people in the North are trying now to flee to the South so that they can live under not so much fear in a society which is freer than in the North.” He urges that the United States “refrain from giving aid”—all kinds—to Vietnam. Thus, no food, no medical assistance, etc.

Turning to foreign policy, Hoan alleges that North Vietnam is supporting Communist insurgents in Thailand and Malaysia and “Vietnam also sells arms worth some \$2 billion to other nations.”⁷⁷

Some of what Hoan reports is no doubt accurate, particularly concerning severe restrictions on personal freedom, including freedom of expression and travel. How credible is his testimony in general? His account of religious persecution is expressly contradicted by direct observation of Westerners and Vietnamese who lived in or visited Vietnam, including those already cited.⁷⁸ Either we must assume that the visitors who report having attended church services and observed ongoing religious activities are all lying and that the religious leaders they spoke to (including those who travelled in Europe) are also Communist agents or are too intimidated to speak, or we must conclude that Hoan is hardly a reliable observer, on these grounds alone. The same is true of his reference to the Third Force activists, who expressly reject his account of their situation and activities, though one could not know this from the U.S. press. As for Tran Quoc Buu, he is not simply considered by the Communists to have been “one of the CIA bosses in Saigon”; he was one. Frank Snepp refers to him as a “CIA client,” “the noted labor leader who had long been a CIA collaborator.” He was the “pride of the Station [CIA] in the fall of 1972,” having been turned into a “collaborator” a year earlier and since used by the CIA “quite profitably, as an instrument for keeping the unions loyal to Thieu and for channeling pro-government propaganda to labor organizations around the world.” He was even suggested by the CIA chief as “a token opposition candidate” so as to avoid “the embarrassment of a one-man contest” for Thieu.⁷⁹ No doubt unions are now agencies of the state, but it is far from clear that workers have less of a role in them than hitherto.⁸⁰

Hoan’s account of the New Economic Zones does not conform to that of direct observers, including those cited above (he reports no direct experience). It seems hardly more credible than his reference to the forced resettlement programs under Diem⁸¹ or the Thieu programs.⁸² It is difficult to see why the leadership in Hanoi, which has certainly been dedicated to economic development (whatever one may think of its politics), should try to resettle the population in “prison camps” or dedicate itself to general impoverishment as Hoan asserts without evidence. Hoan’s claim that no one dares to talk to foreigners without permission is difficult to reconcile with what is reported by visitors with long experience in Vietnam, e.g., visiting Vietnamese who lived with their families, the Mennonite and Quaker visitors or Don Luce, all of whom report personal meetings with friends and former associates, or with reports of relief workers who stayed in

Vietnam for a long period after the end of the war.⁸³ Either the many visitors and Westerners living in Vietnam who expressly contradict his claims are, once again, lying, or a charade of astonishing proportions is being enacted—or, more plausibly, Hoan is simply not a reliable commentator.

Hoan's plea that no aid, even humanitarian, be offered to Vietnam contrasts strikingly with the recommendation of the Pope, for example, in his meeting with visiting church dignitaries from Vietnam (see note 68), and again might cause some raised eyebrows, along with his report of northerners fleeing to the South or Vietnam's foreign involvements.⁸⁴

In short, a reporter of any integrity would be quite cautious in relying on Hoan's testimony, though it would be a mistake to disregard it.

In dramatic contrast to the authentic leaders of the non-Communist opposition to the U.S.-imposed regimes (see, e.g., those listed in note 74), who have vainly attempted to reach a U.S. audience through the medium of the many visitors whose existence is ignored or denied by the Free Press, Hoan has been granted considerable publicity and no questions have been raised about the reliability of what he has reported, despite the substantial evidence that contradicts it. On his arrival in Tokyo, he was interviewed by representatives of the international press. The London *Economist* (7 May 1977) reported Hoan's statement that there is extensive food rationing, "not because of shortages but as a 'communist ruse to break down all possible resistance'" (the *Economist* added that "there are *also genuine shortages*" because of bad weather; our emphasis), and that Bishop Nguyen Van Thuan is rumored to have been killed.⁸⁵ Hoan and two other South Vietnamese politicians who escaped with him said, according to the *Economist*, "that, in retrospect, they believe the American intervention in the Vietnam war was right." The *Economist* speculates that "the government may be clamping down on the remnants of the 'third force.'" It does not report, and to our knowledge has never reported, what well-known Third Force leaders have told to visitors.

Hoan's charges were also reported by David Tharp from Tokyo.⁸⁶ Tharp describes him as "an anti-American leader of the 'peace bloc' under the regime of President Nguyen Van Thieu," which is untrue so far as we can determine, but adds some spice to the story. Hoan "described the lack of food not as a matter of shortages but as a means of breaking down resistance." "Ordinary Vietnamese" who meet journalists are required to "speak through an official interpreter, even though the Vietnamese may be fluent in the language used by the newsman, said Mr. Hoan."⁸⁷ "Mr. Hoan said he now thinks many Vietnamese are

prepared to accept another war to sweep out the Communists.” He is quoted as saying: “The American intervention was right. Just the manner was wrong. They supported a weak government.” He also requested “weapons, food, and medical supplies for anti-Communist guerrilla bands.”

Henry Kamm also reported from Japan on an interview with Hoan,⁸⁸ repeating similar charges. Hoan and his fellow-escapees “said that their disenchantment with Communist rule was shared by all the prominent persons from the old anti-Government organization still in Vietnam, from its best known leaders to the few who still hold public positions.” Like his colleagues, Kamm has never reported the views expressed by these former Third Force leaders and does not inquire into the credibility of Hoan’s report of their views, contradicting their own repeated expression of support for the regime to visitors and friends. Finally, Kamm reports that “so far, the Japanese Government has effectively confined them [Hoan and his fellow-escapees] to this fishing town about 100 miles from Tokyo, where their access to the world public is limited.” He does not compare the “limited access” of Hoan to the U.S. and world press with that of people who actually were courageous leaders of the non-Communist opposition.⁸⁹

Kamm returned to the same theme a few weeks later.⁹⁰ Hoan and his friends from “what used to be the pro-peace opposition in the Saigon parliament” now “find themselves prevented from giving their testimony or the world unwilling to listen.” “People are indifferent,” Hoan told him, “not only the Japanese but even the Vietnamese who have been here for a longer time.” It is quite true that members of the pro-peace opposition to the Thieu regime have been prevented from giving their testimony; Henry Kamm is a well-placed example of those who have refused to allow such testimony to be heard. But Hoan is the only former member of this group who has succeeded in gaining an international audience, despite his insignificant role. The pretense by those who dominate the press that they cannot get their message through is a common device that has often proven useful for propaganda purposes. It is a constant complaint of businessmen, for example. We return to other examples of this useful gambit, which nicely supplements the constant lament that the media are “anti-government” and “fiercely independent.” We have already discussed the ways in which Kamm and his colleagues in the Free Press dealt with the defection of a highly-placed collaborator with the Indonesian government in Timor (see Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.4, note 208 and text), contrasting their silence in that case with the publicity afforded to Hoan, coupled, typically, with the pretense that Hoan is being silenced.

Theodore Jacqueney, who worked with USAID in Vietnam until 1971 when he resigned in disagreement with U.S. support for Thieu and has since become a leading and very well-publicized critic of human rights violations in Vietnam, reported on Hoan's congressional testimony in the pro-war AFL-CIO *Free Trade Union News*, claiming that it confirms "steady refugee reports of Vietnam's Gulag Archipelago."⁹¹ He describes Hoan as "a radical Buddhist peace advocate in South Vietnam's legislature," a judgment that may well reflect the assessment of Jacqueney's U.S. government associates at the time, who commonly interpreted even the mildest dissent as "radical." Jacqueney then reports on a series of interviews with Hoan in which he elaborated on his congressional testimony. Hoan's information about 500 people allegedly executed in his native province derives from a dismissed Communist province chief. Jacqueney reports Hoan's account of what this man told him as follows:

He explained that during the first days after the war they had to eliminate dangerous elements to provide an example and to satisfy desires for revenge. Some people killed were police officials under Thieu who had imprisoned and tortured revolutionaries. Some were simply civilian officials, or just members of political parties. Even ordinary people were killed for personal revenge.

As we have noted before, only by humanitarian standards that are completely foreign to the history and culture of the industrial democracies is it an atrocity to take revenge on torturers. Yet such standards are selectively invoked in the West in the case of a country that has recently freed itself from a century of Western oppression culminating in an explosion of unprecedented barbarism. They are invoked by someone who loyally served those responsible for the rule of the torturers through the worst and most vicious period of their attack on victims who are now denounced for their violation of human rights, in the journal of an organization that not only supported this endeavor but has a long record of support for policies that involve hideous atrocities elsewhere in U.S. domains. Quite apart from these not entirely irrelevant facts, note that if Jacqueney's account of this second-hand report from a highly unreliable source concerning revenge against torturers or even personal revenge against completely innocent people demonstrates that Hanoi has imposed a "Gulag Archipelago," then we will need some new and as yet uninvented phrase, expressing vastly greater levels of horror and indignation, to describe the period of U.S. civil-military administration in France or the behavior of U.S. military and civilian authorities in Asia after World War II, not to speak of the reality of life under the U.S. aegis in Guatemala, Uruguay, and a long list of other subfascist states. But such elementary observations as these have no place in the current phase of Western ideology.

Continuing with Jacqueney's article, he writes that according to Hoan, the worst treatment in the prisons "was reserved for members of political parties who opposed the

Communists, even if they also opposed Saigon dictatorships.” Jacqueney then proceeds to report some authentic cases of political repression (e.g., the imprisonment of Tran Van Tuyen, who died in confinement), and others that are more questionable, for example, the arrest of Father Tran Huu Thanh whom Jacqueney describes as “a popular Catholic priest who led mammoth demonstrations against Thieu regime repression and corruption... [preaching]...a vivid gospel of social justice comparable to that of Martin Luther King, Jr.” Father Thanh was arrested after the quelling of the armed rebellion centered in the Vinh Son Church (see note 68). In fact, he was a psychological warfare specialist who trained ARVN officers at the Central School of Psychological Warfare. Before that, he had been an adviser to Diem, and came to oppose Thieu as ineffective in the war against Communism. He described himself in December, 1974 as belonging to the First Force (with Thieu): “So from the beginning we thought only of replacing the leader and maintaining everything in the structure of the regime.” His anti-Thieu movement called for “clean government” so that the Communists “have to accept to come and live with us as a minority,” the standard U.S. government line at the time. Authentic opponents of the U.S.-imposed regime suspected him of operating with U.S. assistance, and there is supporting evidence. In short, hardly a Martin Luther King.⁹²

As this review indicates, the exposure that the press offers to non-Communist dissidents in Vietnam is not a function of their prominence, their demonstrated courage and reliability, or the credibility of what they have to say as compared with the direct testimony of others. Rather, it is determined by a simple principle: the more negative their report, the more prominently it is featured. This principle, while occasionally violated, serves rather well as a first approximation and falls under the general theory of the Free Press as an agency of the state propaganda system, which, as we have seen throughout these two volumes, is quite well confirmed.

The same principle applies in the case of Western visitors or residents in Vietnam. As we have noted, there have been many, and quite a few of them have excellent credentials for reliability and long experience in the country; in some cases, in postwar Vietnam. But their reports, often critical though sympathetic, have been almost entirely ignored by the Free Press. There has, however, been a glaring exception to the general disregard for testimony by Westerners who remained in Vietnam for a considerable period after the war’s end, or who have returned to the country where they worked and lived; namely, the case of Father André Gelin, a Canadian Jesuit who spent 15 months in Vietnam after the war’s end. An interview he gave to the Paris *L’Express* (amplified by a telephone interview) was reported in the *New York Times* (16 December 1976), in an AP report from

Paris. The *L'Express* article was translated in the *New York Review of Books* (17 March 1977) and excerpted in the *Washington Post* (13 March 1977), and was the subject of editorials in the *New York Times* (21 March 1977) and the *Wall Street Journal* (21 April 1977). A similar article appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* (London) and was reprinted in the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto, 23-24 March 1977). It has also appeared and been the subject of comment elsewhere in the English-language press. This exposure contrasts strikingly with that afforded to reports of others who had spent roughly the same period in Vietnam, or, for example, to the book by the Lacoutures, which, as we have noted, was unable to find an American publisher and was not reviewed in the United States, to our knowledge.⁹³

Not coincidentally, Gelinas's account is the most harshly critical among eyewitness reports by Westerners with comparable experience.

Though Gelinas had spent many years in Vietnam,⁹⁴ he was quite unknown in the West prior to the fall of 1976, and appears to have made no public statement during his 13, or 19, or 28 years in Vietnam concerning the U.S. war—of which, as we shall see, he was and remains a firm supporter.

The initial reaction to Gelinas was tinged with skepticism, for good reasons. The report in the *Times* (December 16), headed “Priest, Back from Saigon Speaks of Mass Suicides,” dealt only with Gelinas's most sensational charge, namely, his claim that “15,000 to 20,000 Vietnamese have committed suicide rather than live under Communism.” How did Gelinas find out this alleged fact? He is quoted as saying that his estimate was “based on conversations with hospital officials and some of the would-be suicides themselves.” In the original AP dispatch, not included in the *Times* account, he is reported to have said that he calculated the estimate of suicides “from figures he got from dozens of hospital officials.”⁹⁵ Further information about the alleged wave of suicides appears in the *L'Express-New York Review* article.⁹⁶ Here he provides a date: the “epidemic of suicides” in which “thousands of ruined and desperate Vietnamese put an end to themselves” followed a September 1975 announcement that each family had the right to only about 1,000 French francs. “Entire families killed themselves with revolvers,” including a police officer who shot his ten children, wife and mother-in-law and then himself and a father who distributed poisoned soup to his family. “A young woman told me that she had awakened in a hospital corridor piled with hundreds of bodies. Those who were still living had their stomachs pumped out. Group suicides went on for several weeks.”

So, in summary, Gelinas is claiming that in September-October, following the

announcement of currency reform, 15-20,000 Vietnamese committed suicide, as he learned from discussions with hospital officials, would-be suicides, figures provided by dozens of hospital officials, and other sources.

In his congressional testimony of June 16, 1977 (see note 70), Gelinas did not repeat the story of mass suicides, which was featured in the earlier news report and article and which had originally brought him to public notice in the United States. Two likely reasons for this curious omission come to mind. The first is that one of the witnesses in the same session was Julia B. Forsythe of the AFSC, who lived two blocks from the Alexandre-de-Rhodes Center through October, 1975, and would therefore have been in a position to know something about such a wave of suicides.⁹⁷ A second reason is the unfortunate experience that Gelinas had had with these charges. The December, 1976 AP dispatch, citing his charges of mass suicides, reports that “there was no independent confirmation of the estimate...Western diplomatic sources said, ‘we cannot verify these rather startling figures.’”⁹⁸ The *Times* article of December 16, 1976, after reporting Gelinas’s headlined charges, turns to a denial of these claims by Richard Hughes, “head of the Shoeshine Boy Foundation, which sheltered and nurtured homeless children in Vietnam,” who remained in Vietnam until a month after Gelinas’s departure, living and working with poor Vietnamese (see note 83). Hughes denied the report, saying “Absolutely impossible that I wouldn’t have heard about it. I was out in the neighborhoods and there were all kinds of people in contact with me, not only from the city, but coming from Da Nang and Hue and the delta. If 40 people in one place had committed suicide it would not have gotten past me.”

Shortly after the sensational charge which introduced Gelinas to the U.S. (in fact Western) public, the following incident took place:

Two or three days later [after the December 16 *New York Times* story], Amy Hirsch, producer of the “Good Morning, America” show on ABC called Father Gelinas for a possible interview on the air. She sat him down with Dick Hughes and listened to the two argue and discuss for over two hours. She decided there was not enough to his story to even put Gelinas on the air. “He wouldn’t name the hospitals...he was very sweet, but he just hadn’t seen very much. There wasn’t enough substance to put him on.” During their conversation in the studio, confirmed by both Hirsch and Hughes, Fr. Gelinas explained the “15-20,000 suicides.” He told the story of a young woman, an attempted suicide, who woke up in a hospital corridor surrounded by “hundreds of bodies.” As it turned out, according to his source, these were attempted suicides, too, though it was unclear why she claimed the bodies were “piled.” In any case, Gelinas explained, “From that, I took the number of hospitals in Saigon...I multiplied it times the number of hospitals...” Thus, the mass suicides in Vietnam turn out to be, after all, an extrapolation of *attempted suicides* from a single source in a hospital that Fr. Gelinas would not name.⁹⁹

Gone are the figures provided by dozens of hospital officials, the entire families that killed themselves with revolvers, etc. This extrapolation merits comparison with that of

Hoang Van Chi, for years the primary source on alleged North Vietnamese atrocities of the 1950s.^{[100](#)}

Hughes has provided us with a detailed report of his several hours of conversation with Gelinas (to which we return), which reveals many more examples of his apparent ignorance of events in South Vietnam and his willingness to frame the most implausible charges against the new regime (see note 106). Hughes, who was known to U.S. reporters and others as a very reliable observer with intimate knowledge—rare among Americans—of the life of the impoverished mass of the population, sent a letter to the *New York Times* (31 March 1977) commenting on the *Times* editorial of March 21 on Gelinas. In this letter he discusses his “probing, three-hour conversation with Father Gelinas” and his failure to unearth any direct evidence for his charges, which appear to illustrate how “second-hand information fed rumor, and bitterness bias” for a foreigner who was one of the many who “could spend literally decades in Indochina and still remain within a small, isolated world,” not an unusual phenomenon in colonial history—one recalls how commonly Western settlers, slave owners, and the like have been shocked to discover the feelings of their charges when insurrection and dissidence arise. The *Times* editorial, Hughes wrote, was “a tragic disservice to both the American and Vietnamese peoples, and to the healing process which has only just begun”—and has since aborted, thanks in part to the dissemination of Gelinas’s charges in the *New York Review* and *Washington Post*, which appear to have been influential among liberal Congressmen^{[101](#)} and certainly were so in the press and among the public. In contrast, the responses to Gelinas have been generally ignored.

Recall that the events of December, 1976 took place well before Gelinas received substantial publicity in the national media. Hirsch’s scruples in investigating the “startling” charges by an unknown commentator, unverifiable by Western diplomatic sources and contradicted by others present in Vietnam at the time to which they refer, were not observed by many of her colleagues.^{[102](#)}

While Gelinas appears to have abandoned the story about the mass suicides, his other comments do not exactly heighten his credibility. He is quoted as saying that the Vietnamese expelled him because “they do not want embarrassing witnesses”^{[103](#)}—which is curious, since many other witnesses who could prove no less “embarrassing” have since been admitted—adding that “I was not treated badly for the regime had strict orders from Moscow not to make martyrs.”^{[104](#)} How could Gelinas have known about these “strict orders”? The question too does not seem to have been raised by the journals that printed

this or other “information” provided by Gelinas without inquiry or comment.

In an interview in the *Montreal Star*, Gelinas said:

People in South Vietnam today are praying for war...the way people in France were praying for it in 1942. They want to be invaded...I could hardly believe it when I heard people talking about war. They'd been at war for 20 years [sic]. But I actually had people say to me, “why don't the Americans send us the atomic bomb? It's the only way we'll get rid of the Communists.”¹⁰⁵

Some skepticism is perhaps in order when we read that South Vietnamese are praying for an invasion and plead for atomic bombing, even apart from the direct testimony of many Western visitors and residents who have received a rather different impression.

Gelinas goes on to say that “the new cadres (North Vietnamese officials) lived like kings. They were almost the only fat people in Saigon and their children were driven to school in limousines (usually Chevrolets captured from the Americans).” Again, this claim is in dramatic contrast to the reports of Western observers about the general behavior of the North Vietnamese, apart from cases of corruption that have been discussed by the Vietnamese themselves. Braid notes that this claim is rejected by Father Tran Tam Tinh, who “denies that the cadres live rich lives” and says: “I've visited them where they live and they live in poverty, like the rest of the people.” But, Braid continues, “Father Gelinas does not seem troubled by such criticism. He says his critics are repeating what the government has told them to say...”—knowledge derived from the same source, perhaps, as the “fact” that he was well-treated by orders from Moscow. Presumably those under government orders include also the journalists, visitors and long-time Western residents who have reported the poverty and dedication of the cadres, as well as his many critics.

Gelinas's widely publicized interview in the *New York Review* elicited a response, dated March 16, 1977, from Earl Martin, who worked with the Mennonite Central Committee from 1966 through 1969 and again from 1973 until the end of the war. It contains a response to Gelinas's major charges, based on eyewitness testimony, which is so detailed and specific that it seems unnecessary to review the charges and their refutation here.¹⁰⁶ Martin's response appeared on May 12, 1977, with no accompanying response from Gelinas, contrary to standard (virtually invariable) practice. The long delay and the lack of response suggests that the *New York Review* was unable to obtain a response to Martin's point-by-point refutation of Gelinas's charges.

Gelinas's further claims, which are hardly plausible in themselves, are entirely inconsistent with eyewitness reports by journalists and others cited above: e.g., his claim that “the official line that the girls [prostitutes] have been sent away for ‘re-education’ is simply propaganda,” that “one of the first aims of the Vietnamese Communists was to

empty the cities,” or that “the economy is also impoverished by the exactions of the North,” etc.¹⁰⁷ Gelinas offers no evidence beyond what he claims to have seen and heard. Anyone who reads through his series of charges and contrasts them with other sources, and who compares the reliability of Gelinas and those who have explicitly denied his claims or others who have presented substantial evidence to the contrary, can scarcely fail to agree with Earl Martin’s conclusion that “André Gelinas has seriously eroded any basis he might have had for serving as a credible witness.”

Nevertheless, it is Gelinas’s story that has remained “the truth” for the Free Press. In an editorial,¹⁰⁸ the *Times* conveys without any question “the picture that Father Gelinas paints of South Vietnam”—overlooking, for example, the doubts raised in their own news report of December 16, 1976. This is entirely appropriate—since Gelinas’s account is very critical of an official enemy, its truthfulness is irrelevant and no further analysis is required. There is no need, for example, to assess his reliability, to weigh the testimony of other witnesses with a different view, or to consider the evidence of his critics. The *Times* editorial focuses on the “bitter and inescapable ironies” contained in Father Gelinas’s report “for those who opposed the war.”

Suppose, contrary to fact, that Gelinas’s report was credible. In what respect would it then pose “bitter and inescapable ironies” for people who are opposed in principle to aggression and massacre? That question the *Times* editors do not discuss, and undoubtedly could not comprehend, so mired are they in official ideology, which does not permit this principle to be expressed with reference to the United States. Rather, in the official version to which the *Times* is committed, questions of principle do not arise: one may either support the policies of the United States or back its enemies, “look[ing] to the Communists as saviors of that unhappy land.” The latter phrase is the standard *Times* straw man concerning those who opposed U.S. aggression in Vietnam on grounds of principle instead of inefficacy; recall that such views do not enter the spectrum of debate, as defined by *Times* ideologists.¹⁰⁹ The *Times* argues that “the Vietnam experience was always more complex than ideologues of either side could allow. America may have played a villain’s role there, but the heroes of that tragedy were never easy to discern.” The “heroes” of the German war against the Jews would be equally hard for mildly critical ex-Nazis to discern, and one can imagine a German super-patriot pointing to Israeli abuse of the Palestinians as somehow relevant to evaluating the “complexities” of the “final solution.” Incapable of conceiving of the possibility that its own state was guilty of unprovoked aggression and massacre of innocents that could be condemned in and of

itself, the *Times* is compelled to suppose that attitudes towards the war were restricted to its own chauvinism or to comparable blind loyalty to some other regime.

Referring to that “minority, small but vehement, that looked to the Communists as saviors of that unhappy land,” the editorial continues:

One organ of this celebration was *The New York Review of Books*, and so it comes as a surprise—a welcome one—to find reprinted in a recent issue an article from the French journal *L'Express* by André Gelinas, a French-Canadian Catholic priest and Chinese scholar who settled in Vietnam in 1948 and was expelled in July, 1976.^{[110](#)}

This extends further the *Times*' false portrayal of opponents of the war; the reader can easily determine, by turning back to the articles on the war that appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, that it never was an “organ of celebration” for the Communists as “saviors” of Vietnam, although it did publish articles documenting the atrocities and outrages that the *Times* supported, with its occasional whispers of complaint about blunders and failures and its suppression of evidence on many of the worst of these atrocities. What is more, the *Times* editors surely know that while the *New York Review* was unusual in that it was open to the peace movement and the U.S. left for several years (though hardly restricted to such circles), that tendency had come to an end years before, as the *Review* rejoined the mainstream of American liberalism. But for the state propaganda institutions that masquerade as the “independent press,” the pretense is a useful one, as is the further pretense that Gelinas's picture is utterly definitive and beyond question.

The *Wall Street Journal*, as might be anticipated, took up the same theme.^{[111](#)} Like their colleagues on the *Times*, the *Journal* editors describe the “national debate” over the war between those who supported the U.S. effort and those who claimed that President Johnson's “picture of Communism was a paranoid fiction” and argued that Communism could hardly be “worse than the repressive South Vietnamese regime that the Americans were already supporting.” It is incomprehensible to the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, as to other true believers in the state religion, that people might oppose U.S. aggression on grounds of principle, while holding quite a range of views (including total condemnation) or simply taking no stand on the merits of the Vietnamese resistance *per se* or relative to the elements placed in power by U.S. force, but rather guided by the odd notion that the Vietnamese should be allowed to solve their problems in their own way without the benefit of U.S. tutelage by bombs, artillery, murderous search-and-destroy missions, assassination teams, “population control,” or subversion.

Returning to the “national debate,” the editors observe that “for better or for worse,

history has given us the opportunity to judge the debate”—we now see that “Mr. Johnson’s prediction was not so paranoid after all.” As proof, they refer to the interview with Andre Gelin [sic]¹¹² who “had lived and worked there for 28 years,” reprinted “without editorial comment” in the *New York Review of Books*, a most “remarkable” fact since this journal “had printed some of the most violent of the opposition to the American anti-Communist effort in Vietnam.” They recount without editorial comment “Gelin’s” picture of life in South Vietnam—since it accords with the doctrines of their faith, it must be true, regardless of the facts, so that any serious check on its contents is beside the point—and they demonstrate no awareness of the actual nature of the criticism of the U.S. war that appeared in the *New York Review* during the years when it was open to the peace movement and American left.

The “embarrassment” of former antiwar protestors, the *Wall Street Journal* continues, “is richly deserved.” Anyone who was acquainted with the history of Communism could not “have trusted this experience and at the same time reviled America and American motives in Vietnam as the antiwar movement came to do.” If the editors were not propagandists quite uninterested in fact, they would know that the criticisms of the U.S. war in Vietnam that appeared in the *New York Review* were written for the most part by people who were long-time anti-Communists. Furthermore, if the editors were capable of rationality on these matters, they might understand that criticism of acts and “motives” of the U.S. government is logically quite independent of one’s attitude toward Communism, exactly as one may “revile Russia and Russian motives in Eastern Europe” without thereby committing oneself to “trust the experience” of the exercise of U.S. power. But these points, however obvious, are of little concern to editors whose ideological commitment is total.

Father Gelinas has also been welcomed by the more fanatical wing of British scholarship. Patrick Honey, the pacifist advocate of dike bombing (see above, p. 69) who (with Dennis Duncanson of the British mission to Vietnam) had long been one of the more passionate advocates of U.S. aggression, chaired a meeting Gelinas at the School for Oriental and African Studies in November, 1976.¹¹³ One can see why. Imagine a man of the cloth who was able to live for 13 (or 19, or 28) years in Vietnam through the worst barbarism of the U.S. war, never raising a peep of protest so far as is known, then inventing mass suicides and North Vietnamese coups to order for an admiring international audience.

Gelinas’s description of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the regime it imposed

would have sufficed for anyone with a minimal acquaintance with the history of the past years to reveal that he is hardly to be trusted, a fact that appears to have been of no concern to those who published his reports or commented editorially on them.¹¹⁴ In the widely-cited interview that made his fame, he writes that the North Vietnamese troops who conquered the South¹¹⁵ “discovered a country with freedoms, and a rich one, a real Ali Baba’s cave.” It takes either supreme cynicism or the kind of classical colonialist ignorance that comes from hobnobbing solely with the rich to depict South Vietnam simply as a land of freedom and wealth. Gelinas evidently did not know or care about the rotting urban slums to which the peasants had been driven by U.S. bombardment, or the lunar landscapes of central Vietnam, or the beggars, prostitutes, drug addicts, wounded and tortured prisoners of the Ali Baba’s cave in Saigon; and he seems unable to comprehend the nature of the riches of the South and their relation to the colonialist enterprise of which he was a willing part.¹¹⁶ The most that he can bring himself to say about the Western contribution is that “the old regime and the Westerners also did great harm and made many errors”—and even this criticism is more than he was able to bring himself to express in public during the years when an honest witness might have mattered. He insists, in his congressional testimony, that “this people is now in a terrible state, not because of American presence in the past, for my conviction, but because of the oppressive rule of the government” (43)—a statement that is truly shocking in its cynicism, even if we were to believe every word of his claims about the postwar period, or worse. The United States, he continues, “has done so much, spent so much, and given so much of its blood for Vietnam,” which is “not just any other country” but rather “a country that has been fighting alongside this country [the U.S.]” (45). Vietnam has been fighting alongside the United States; the United States has done so much for Vietnam. No wonder that such a man can tell us that Vietnamese pray to be invaded with atom bombs so that they can regain their past freedom and wealth, to the applause of his Western admirers.

The most severe condemnation of the regime in Vietnam yet to appear from a serious source is that of R.-P. Paringaux of *Le Monde* (5 October 1978). Paringaux writes from Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) that the new regime has come to resemble its predecessor, the U.S. client regime in Saigon, with “systematic recourse to repression, preventive arrest on simple suspicion, denunciation, making informing on others a duty and allowing all those who do not conform to the new model to stagnate in camps, aggravating their hatred and hopelessness.” He cites figures of 80,000 former collaborators still under detention, noting that refugee sources in Paris give figures ten times that high supported by documentary evidence. Few have been released, Paringaux maintains, apart from doctors, technicians

and teachers whose services are needed. He quotes official sources which claim that 95% of the prisoners have been released. Paringaux writes that “known [non-Communist] activists who were courageously devoted to defense of political prisoners under the former regime have now become silent.” He indicates that the former prisons are once again full, perhaps even more than before. He does not suggest that the current regime, however repressive, is practicing the hideous tortures characteristic of its U.S.-imposed predecessor.

Shortly after Paringaux and other French reporters wrote their critical reports about Vietnam, after their 10-day visit, John Fraser of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* spent four weeks travelling through the country with, he writes, “more access and freedom to roam independently throughout Vietnam (seven provinces and the two principal cities) than any western journalist since 1975.” He was specifically interested in verifying the observations and conclusions of the French journalists. Fraser is very critical of the regime for slowly compelling the bourgeoisie to become farmers (though he appreciates the economic motives) and for its repression of critics and opposition. But he came to the conclusion that the reports of the French journalists were vastly exaggerated. He explains why in considerable detail, relating his own much more extensive experiences, including many discussions with Vietnamese who were highly critical of the regime, and considering the social and economic conditions of the country as well as official policy.¹¹⁷ A detailed analysis of the report by Paringaux in *Vietnam South East Asia International* (Oct.-Dec. 1978), also points out that the source of the 800,000 figure that Paringaux cites, and that has been uncritically repeated in the Western media, is a document by a group of Indochinese emigres in Paris which includes in the figure for prisoners “not only those alleged to be in detention but also those who have left the cities for new economic zones, for which a figure of 750,000 was given in early 1978.” Thus the 800,000 figure is consistent “for security reasons.” As we have noted, independent observers do not confirm the allegation that those who have been moved to the New Economic Zones were forcibly deported to a form of “imprisonment;” and these observers generally agree that such a move to the countryside was essential for Vietnam’s survival.

Paringaux’s report and the accompanying editorial condemnation (“Crimes de paix”) in *Le Monde* received immediate attention in the national media in the United States. They were reported the same day on radio, television and the press.¹¹⁸ It is entirely appropriate for the national media in the United States to feature this report from a respected foreign journal.¹¹⁹ One’s admiration for the professionalism of the U.S. media is quickly

dissipated, however, by their virtual disregard of Fraser's different view and their uncritical acceptance of "worst view" interpretations of matters such as the New Economic Zones. We may also recall media behavior on other occasions when *Le Monde* published far more sensational reports, which are, furthermore, incomparably more significant in the United States. For example, in July 1968, the distinguished Southeast Asia correspondent for *Le Monde*, Jacques Decornoy, published eyewitness reports of the devastating American "secret bombing" of northern Laos.¹²⁰ Over a year later, the *New York Times* finally became willing to publish the fact that, as Decornoy had reported, the U.S. Air Force was trying to destroy "the rebel economy and social fabric" (with no editorial comment on the significance of this fact).¹²¹ In the interim, considerable efforts were made to convince the *New York Times*, Time-Life, and other major journals in the United States merely to report the facts, which were not in doubt. They refused. To take another case, the Latin American correspondent of *Le Monde*, Marcel Niedergang, reported in January, 1968 that the vice president of Guatemala stated in a public speech that "American planes based in Panama take part in military operations in Guatemala" in which "napalm is frequently used in zones suspected of serving as refuge for the rebels."¹²² The same speech was cited in the British press by Hugh O'Shaughnessy, who went on to say that "similar things are happening in Nicaragua, which is virtually a U.S. colony and where guerrilla warfare broke out this year."¹²³ Whether the official Guatemalan claim was true or not, the very fact that a high official of a client state announces that U.S. planes are carrying out bombing raids with napalm in "zones suspected of serving as refuge for the rebels" (zones of civilian settlement, presumably) is quite sensational news, or would be, in a country with a free press. But this information too was suppressed by the Free Press, though in this case as well, it was repeatedly brought to their attention.¹²⁴

Reports of U.S. bombing of the economy and social fabric of countries with which the United States is not at war are incomparably more significant than the report on Vietnam that was so quickly publicized by the national media in the United States in October, 1978. Not only are the atrocities far more severe, but they are also more important to know about in the United States, for the obvious reason that public opinion might be effective in bringing them to a halt, which is, plainly, not the case in Vietnam, whatever the situation may be there. We see once again how remarkably analogous the Free Press is in its behavior to the media that operate under state control in totalitarian societies. It would come as no surprise at all to discover that *Pravda* quickly discovers and features *Le Monde* stories on U.S. atrocities (perhaps describing *Le Monde* as the "rightwing French

journal”),¹²⁵ though we would be surprised indeed to see a *Le Monde* report in *Pravda* on the invasion of Hungary or Czechoslovakia.

In this discussion we have not attempted to give a systematic portrayal of the nature of the Communist regime in Vietnam or to portray the society that is arising from the wreckage of the U.S. war. Rather, our concern has been to show how the Free Press selects evidence from what is available to paint a picture that conforms to the requirements of state propaganda in the post-Vietnam War era. The media have not been entirely uniform in this respect, as we have noted, and ideologists still must face the problem of dealing with the fact that many millions of Americans participated actively in a popular movement to bring the war to an end. Though this opposition is being quickly written out of history by contemporary ideologues, memories remain and the brain-washing process still has a long way to go before it is successful. But successful it will be, in the absence of any continuing mass movement that creates its own organs of expression outside of the conformist media, and its own modes of organization and action to constrain the violence of the state and to change the social structures that engender and support it.

Laos

The U.S. war in Laos is typically called a “secret war,” and with reason. During the period of the most ferocious bombing of the civilian society of northern Laos, which even the U.S. government conceded was unrelated to military operations in Vietnam or Cambodia, the press consciously suppressed eyewitness testimony by well-known noncommunist Western reporters. Earlier, fabricated tales of “Communist aggression” in Laos had been widely circulated by a number of influential correspondents.¹ In the elections of 1958, which the U.S. government vainly attempted to manipulate, the Pathet Lao emerged victorious, but U.S. subversion succeeded in undermining the political settlement. At one point the United States backed a right-wing Thai-based military attack against the government recognized by the United States. All of this barely entered public awareness. The same was true of the CIA-sponsored subversion that played a significant role in undermining the 1962 agreements, a settlement which, if allowed to prevail, might well have isolated Laos from the grim effects of the war in Southeast Asia.

The hill tribesmen recruited by the CIA (as they had been by the French) to hold back the social revolution in Laos, were decimated, then abandoned when their services were no longer needed. Again, the press was unconcerned. When John Everingham, a Lao-speaking Australian reporter, travelled in 1970 “through dying village after dying village” among the Hmong who had been “naive enough to trust the CIA” and were now being offered “a one-way ‘copter ride to death’” in the CIA clandestine army, no U.S. journal (apart from the tiny pacifist press) was interested enough to cover the story, though by that time even the *New York Times* was permitting an occasional report on the incredible bombing that had “turned more than half the total area of Laos to a land of charred ruins where people fear the sky” so that “nothing be left standing or alive for the communists to inherit” (Everingham). The Hmong tribesmen cannot flee to the Pathet Lao zones or they too will be subjected to the merciless bombardment, he wrote: “Like desperate dogs they are trapped, and the CIA holds the leash, and is not about to let it go as long as the Meo [Hmong] army can hold back the Pathet Lao a little longer, giving the Americans and their allies a little more security 100 miles south at the Thailand border.”

It is only after the war’s end, when the miserable remnants of the Hmong can be put on display as “victims of Communism,” that American sensibilities have been aroused, and the press features stories that bewail their plight.²

Extensive analysis of refugee reports was conducted at the time by a few young Americans associated with International Voluntary Services in Laos. In scale and care, these studies exceed by a considerable measure the subsequent studies of refugees from Cambodia that have received massive publicity in the West, and the story is every bit as gruesome. But the press was rarely interested and published materials, which appeared primarily outside the mainstream media, were virtually ignored and quickly forgotten.³ As in the case of Timor, the agency of terrorism made the facts incompatible with the purposes of the propaganda system. The press, and scholarship as well, much preferred government tales of “North Vietnamese aggression,” and continued to engage in flights of fancy based on the flimsiest evidence while ignoring the substantial factual material that undermined these claims.⁴

With the expulsion of John Everingham of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* from Laos by the new regime, no full-time Western journalists remain in Laos so that direct reporting is sparse and most of what appears in the press derives from Bangkok. Such testimony must be regarded with even more than the usual care.⁵ Direct reporting by Westerners from Laos can still be found, however, by those who have learned over the years not to rely on the established press for “news.” For example, two representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee, Linda and Murray Hiebert, left Vientiane at the end of January, 1978, after five years of volunteer service in Laos and Vietnam, and wrote several articles “prepared on the basis of research in Laos, including visits to a wide variety of places and projects, interviews with government officials and ordinary people, and evaluation of data collected by United Nations and Lao government agencies.”⁶ We will return later to their eyewitness accounts and those of others who also bring perspectives that render them unusable by the Free Press.

The media have often feigned a touching regard for “lovely little Laos” and its “gentle folk,” even while they were suppressing the abundant evidence on the murderous U.S. attack on the land and its people. When the war ended, Harry Reasoner, the commentator for ABC News, offered a fairly typical reaction, which was considered sufficiently profound to merit reprinting in the press.⁷ He expressed his “guess” that the Laotians, with their “innate disbelief and disinterest in these bloody games” played “by more activist powers like Russia and China and the United States and North Vietnam”—these are the “activist powers” that share responsibility for the turmoil in Indochina—will show that “there is some alternative for small, old places to becoming either Chile or Albania.” So Laos may preserve its “elephants, eroticism, and phallic symbols”—and presumably,

though he does not mention it, its average life expectancy of 40 years, its infant mortality rate of over 120 per thousand births (one of the highest in the world) and the rate of child deaths which will kill 240,000 of 850,000 infants before their first birthday in the next five years.⁸

Reasoner continues: “I hope the benign royalty which has presided over the clowning of the CIA and the vicious invasion of the North Vietnamese will be able to absorb and disregard a native communist hierarchy.” The “invasion of the North Vietnamese” was largely a fabrication of U.S. propagandists duly transmitted by the press and scholarship⁹ and the “clowning of the CIA” included those merry games that virtually destroyed those Hmong naive enough to trust them, while massacring defenseless peasant communities and converting much of Laos to a moonscape, still littered with unexploded ordnance.

The *New York Times* presented a historical analysis of the war as it came to an end.¹⁰ “Some 350,000 men, women and children have been killed, it is estimated, and a tenth of the population of three million uprooted” in this “fratricidal strife that was increased to tragic proportions by warring outsiders.” In actuality, as in the case of Vietnam, it appears unlikely that there would have been any extended “fratricidal strife” had it not been for outsiders, of whom the United States was decisively important. The “history” is very well-sanitized, as befits America’s “newspaper of record.” The U.S. role is completely ignored apart from a few marginal and misleading references.¹¹ As late as 1975, the *New York Times* is still pretending that the U.S. bombers were striking only North Vietnamese supply trails—Saxon mentions no other bombing—although the ferocious aerial warfare waged against the civilian society of northern Laos was by then well-known, and had even been reported occasionally in the *Times*.¹² Ideologically based misrepresentations of history pervade the article, e.g., in the reference to the 1954 Geneva conference which “left Laos with an ineffective International Control Commission and enough ambiguities for the Pathet Lao to retain its stronghold.” The ICC was indeed ineffective in preventing U.S. subversion in subsequent years, as the United States attempted to exploit “ambiguities” it perceived or invented in international agreements that permitted Pathet Lao control of the areas in question and laid the basis for their integration into the national political system in 1958, with consequences already noted.

When the war ended in 1975, the victorious Pathet Lao appear to have made some efforts to achieve a reconciliation with the mountain tribesmen who had been organized in the CIA clandestine army. One of the leaders of the Hmong (“who are best known to the outside world by the pejorative name ‘Meo’”), Lyteck Lynhiavu, held the position of

director of administration in the Ministry of the Interior in the coalition government. He was the leader of a small group of Hmong who had refused to join the CIA-Yang Pao operation. Lyteck tried to stem the flight of Hmong tribesmen (who “had reason to be fearful because it was they who had done much of the hardest fighting against the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese supporters”) to Thailand, but in vain. Lyteck “alleged that the U.S. had flown leaflets to Long Cheng [the base of the CIA army] and that these caused the Hmong people there to fear for their lives.” U.S. officials denied the charge; “other sources said that the leaflets were in circulation long before Gen. Yang Pao left Laos and that they had been produced for propaganda purposes by an officer who had worked for the general,” who was commander of the CIA clandestine army.¹³ “Whatever their origin, the leaflets appeared to be a fabrication. They were written in a complicated style that would have been difficult for many of the Hmong to understand.”¹⁴

Lewis M. Simons, another correspondent with a record of serious reporting, gave a detailed account of Pathet Lao “reeducation” programs shortly after.¹⁵ He interviewed people who had participated in Pathet Lao-organized “seminars” where “to the surprise of even some of the more skeptical, a lot of what they are taught seems to make sense to them.” One office clerk reported: “The Pathet Lao are genuine patriots. They want to teach us pride in ourselves and our country, something we never had under the old regime.” A graduate student expressed admiration for what he called the “scientific” approach the Pathet Lao took at the seminars, which he said were “tailored to the educational level of the people attending” and included persuasive arguments, though the authoritarian character of the system that was being introduced was evident enough: “There’s no doubt in my mind that they’re sincerely interested in improving the lives of the common people. That’s more than you could ever have said for the previous government.”

How common such reactions may be is an open question. Norman Peagam, a Lao-speaking correspondent of demonstrated integrity, wrote a long and critical report from Vientiane in the *New York Times* a year and a half later.¹⁶ “Little of the surface of life seems to have changed in Vientiane two years after the Communists’ gradual and bloodless seizure of power,” though the economy is run down “partly as a result of the halt in United States aid in 1975 and the blockade imposed by neighboring Thailand,” which controls Laos’s access to the outside world. But there have been changes: “Crime, drug addiction and prostitution have been largely suppressed” and “everyone is expected to work hard and take part in communal rice and vegetable projects in the evening and on weekends.” Most of the professional and commercial elite are among the 100,000 people

who have fled (the great majority of whom, however, were hill tribesmen), and some farmers and urban workers have also escaped despite the border guards who often shoot at refugees. Many others “want to leave but lack the money, the connections or the courage,” while “there are many others who support the new Government or at least accept it despite all the difficulties,” and hundreds have returned from France and other Western countries.¹⁷ Outside of Vientiane, “it seems likely that the Communists have a solid political base in the two-thirds of Laos that they effectively controlled during the recurrent conflicts that began in the 1950s. In the fertile populated Mekong Valley, where they are still relative newcomers, their power is largely maintained through apathy and the threat of armed force.” Western diplomats estimate the number in reeducation centers at 30,000. “They are being kept in centers ranging from picturesque islands for juvenile delinquents, drug addicts and prostitutes¹⁸ to remote labor camps barred to outsiders from which only a handful of people have so far returned.” “Western diplomats list firm political will, honesty, patriotism and discipline as the new rulers’ main strengths. But, they maintain, the priority of ideological over technical considerations, the Communists’ deep suspicion of Westerners and intolerance of dissent and their poor managerial skills seriously hamper efforts to develop the country.” Another “factor hampering development has been the activities of rebels”; “it seems apparent that Thai officials give them support.” Another problem is corruption and the “new elite” of government and party officials who “enjoy numerous privileges not available to others,” creating cynicism and leading to exploitation of peasants “partly to feed this unproductive class.”

As in the case of Vietnam, one can find little discussion in the U.S. press of the Lao programs of reconstruction and social and economic development, or the problems that confront them. Repression and resistance, in contrast, are major themes of the scanty reporting. A brief report from Thailand describes “harsh concentration camps and a network of labor farms holding tens of thousands of political prisoners...Informed Western sources estimate that 60,000 persons, many with little hope of rehabilitation, are in about 50 camps.”¹⁹ Henry Kamm cast his baleful eye on Laos in March, 1978,²⁰ reporting the continued flow of “Meo hill tribesmen of Laos who fought for the United States in the Indochina war,”²¹ some still carrying “their American-issued rifles.” The refugees report “a major military campaign by Laotian and Vietnamese forces”—U.S.-style, with “long-range artillery shelling, which was followed by aerial rocketing, bombing and strafing,” burning villages and food supplies, driving villagers into the forests (March 28). And again on the following day: “The Communists are bombing and rocketing Meo villages, presumably causing civilian casualties.” “Resistance groups of

various sizes, operating independently and without central direction or foreign assistance, are active throughout Laos, according to self-described resistance fighters, other recent refugees and diplomatic sources.”

That the resistance forces are operating without U.S. or Thai assistance seems dubious (cf. Peagam, above, and notes 17 and 24), in the light of the long history of U.S. intervention in Laos based in Thailand, always the “focal point” for U.S. terror and subversion in Southeast Asia.²² And the record of U.S. journalism with regard to Laos is in general so abysmal that even if there is an American hand, if a long tradition prevails, the reader of the *New York Times* will be unlikely to hear about it—though an exposé may come years later when the dirty work is long finished and the CIA is once again being reformed, in keeping with traditional U.S. commitments to justice, democracy, and freedom.

The guerrilla groups, Kamm claims, are “led mainly by former officers of the Laotian regular and irregular armies”—the latter term being the euphemism for the forces organized and directed by the CIA—“and are said to include significant numbers of defectors from the Pathet Lao, the Communist guerrilla organization [who, incidentally, constitute the present government, recognized by the United States], who are unhappy about the growing Vietnamese influence in their country.”²³ Kamm’s “picture of the Meo’s situation in Laos” conveniently omits any discussion of the U.S. program to organize them to fight for the United States, trapping them like desperate dogs and throwing away the leash when they lost their usefulness. Other problems and developments in Laos are not on the beat of the *Times* Pulitzer prize winner.²⁴

The continued resistance of the Hmong serves as an inspiration to the editors of the *Christian Science Monitor*, who write (5 April 1978) that “one can only marvel at the human spirit and the tenacious longing of men for independence,” sentiments that they never expressed when Laotian peasants were struggling to survive in the face of a ferocious U.S. attack that vastly exceeds in scale anything that the Communists are capable of mounting. “The fighting serves to remind the world—a long five years after the Indo-China war—that the communists have not won the hearts and minds of the people. They have victimized them.” Note that for these representatives of the Free Press, “the people”—a term that rarely appears in U.S. journalism—are the hill tribesmen, who, as Kamm correctly reports, “fought for the United States in the Indochina war.”

The *Monitor* editorialists are as oblivious as Henry Kamm to the past record of U.S. involvement with the hill tribesmen (nor do they seem aware of their own news reports;

see above, p. 140). But they do know that Laos was bombed, though they do not seem to recall by whom: “Mercilessly bombed during the war, today Laos is hounded with problems, including a terrible food shortage (it was once self-sufficient in food), a disrupted economy, an exodus of skilled technicians, and of course political domination by the Vietnamese”—of course. “Little Laos is in fact tragically caught between the anvil and the hammer: a pawn of the Vietnamese as the frontline of defense against Thailand and a client of the Soviet Union in its big-power competition with China.”

In the light of the well-known historical facts, it is no less than amazing that a major U.S. newspaper, one of the few that attends seriously to international affairs, and one that exudes moralism in its editorial commentary, can fail to make any mention whatsoever of the U.S. role, past and present, in creating these “problems,” presented as if they were entirely the fault of the Communists. Once again, we see the remarkable similarities between the Free Press and its counterparts in the totalitarian states.

But, the *Monitor* informs us, “some signs of hope for the long-suffering Laotian people are emerging.” In particular, “if they [the Laotian Communists] were to resolve the issue of the MIAs, they would also be able to improve relations with the United States.” At this point, words fail.

And then these final thoughts:

In the final analysis, it will all depend on Hanoi. The question is how soon the Vietnamese want to establish normal links with the West and derive the benefits that come from being responsible members of the international community. As the men in Hanoi ponder their strategy, the people of Laos go on enduring.

If only Hanoi would choose to become a “responsible member of the international community,” joining the country that pounded Laos to dust while the *Monitor* looked the other way, then the long-suffering people of Laos might see a ray of hope. Hanoi is responsible for their tragedy, not the murderers and their accomplices in the press.^{[25](#)}

The *New York Times* did run an Op-Ed describing the scandalous refusal of the Carter Administration to respond to the appeal of the Laotian government for international assistance “to stave off the impending disaster” of starvation after a terrible drought.^{[26](#)} This Op-Ed cites the two Mennonite relief workers who had just returned from Laos^{[27](#)} who report “that irrigation networks have collapsed and that paddy fields are pockmarked with bomb craters.”^{[28](#)} Others have estimated that so many buffalo were killed during the war that farmers “have to harness themselves to plows to till fields” while “unexploded bombs buried in the ground hamper food production.” But the U.S. Administration, fearing “that it will appear to be pro-Communist, thereby jeopardizing the canal treaties,”

has refused to send any of its rice surplus (the world's largest) to Laos, despite impending starvation.²⁹ The problem is compounded by the fact that "last year the Congress specifically forbade direct aid to Laos," though the "Food for Peace law" permits an exception. "Any more delay in Washington would simply compound the barbarity that the United States has already brought to that region"—and specifically, to Laos, though one could hardly learn that fact from current reports in the *Free Press*.³⁰ For an indication of the impact of this statement, see the *Monitor* editorial (just cited), three weeks later.

While in the United States, it is axiomatic that "of course" the Vietnamese dominate little Laos, caught between the Vietnamese hammer and the Russian anvil, others, who suffer the disadvantage of familiarity and concern with fact, express some doubts. Nayan Chanda writes from Vientiane that:

Diplomats here dismiss some of the sensational Bangkok press stories about ministries crawling with Vietnamese advisers, but they believe that a sizable number of Vietnamese—soldiers and engineers—are building roads and bridges in eastern and central Laos. Although old colonial routes 7, 8 and 9 are dirt tracks unusable during the monsoons, they helped bring essential supplies from Vietnam in the dark days of 1975 when Thailand closed its borders. The Vietnamese now working to repair these routes are thus helping to reduce Lao dependence on Thailand.³¹

Lao dependence on U.S.-backed Thailand has been a crucial element in its postwar distress—a fact which escaped the attention of the *Monitor* in its ode to the human spirit—alongside of U.S. cruelty in withholding aid, which likewise escaped notice. "Both Lao and Vietnamese officials privately admit," Nayan Chanda reports, "that Thailand is going to be Vientiane's lifeline to the world for years to come."³² The heavily-bombed roads to Vietnam and Cambodia "need large-scale repairs before being put to commercial use" and problems in Vietnamese ports make it doubtful that this construction will be of much help to Laos in the short term. Meanwhile, Thailand is controlling the lifeline effectively: "A *de facto* blockade by Thailand has virtually halted the trickle of foreign aid and Laos' own drive to earn foreign currency through exports." The Lao government reported that the blockade "has been asphyxiating the economy," and foreign missions complain of "harassment by Thai customs."³³

Quite apart from food and supplies, Thailand had refused to ship medicines ordered and paid for by the International Red Cross. Meanwhile in Laos malaria has been raging since the United States cut off its malaria prevention program in 1975, "killing adults and children indiscriminately, infecting pregnant women, and weakening many people so that they cannot work"—it is "having a 'devastating effect' on the Lao population," according to foreign doctors, along with intestinal and respiratory illnesses, typhoid and malnutrition. When the oxygen-producing plant broke down and surgical operations had

to be suspended, Thailand refused to allow emergency deliveries of oxygen, according to Laotian officials.³⁴

Warnings of imminent starvation as a result of the recent severe drought and other causes have been repeatedly voiced by UN officials, foreign journalists, and others.³⁵

In addition to the problems caused by the consequences of the U.S. air war, the drought, and the Thai blockade that had virtually halted the trickle of foreign aid as well as Lao exports, Laos faces structural problems that are a legacy of French and U.S. imperialism.³⁶ The economy inherited by the Pathet Lao was “totally artificial,” with its “crippling dependence” on dollar aid, and “the nature of the outside influence brought serious distortion to a subsistence economy,” Chanda observes.³⁷ He cites a confidential World Bank report of 1975 which

pointed out that in the Vientiane zone industrial production (almost entirely comprising brewing and soft-drink manufacture), and the structure of urban services in general, were “heavily influenced by the demand of expatriates and a tiny, wealthy fraction of the Laotian population.” The main “production” of towns like Vientiane was administration, services for the administration and foreign personnel attached to it, and, of much less importance, production and services for the rest of the urban population—and, finally, for the country at large.

It is “the structural imbalance and artificial economy inherited from the old regime” that lie “at the root of the present crisis,” though “a series of blunders by the new Government worsened the situation.” The same World Bank report “warned that termination of the [foreign, largely U.S. aid] programme ‘would cause the collapse of organised administration, and much of urban life.’” The aid was terminated, even vital food, malaria control and medical supplies. Without large aid commitments from West or East, and lacking export earnings, “harsh economy measures are inevitable” and “the exodus of refugees seeking a better life abroad continues,” stirring the compassion of Westerners who deplore Communist depravity as Laos groans between the Vietnamese hammer and the Russian anvil.

Like other beneficiaries of Western tutelage and benevolence for many years, the Lao often do not find it easy to comprehend the profound humanitarian commitments of the West—recall their “deep suspicion of Westerners”—thus leading them to mistake as well the meaning of the noble Human Rights Crusade now being led, once again, by the United States:

Asked how he viewed the opposition of the American Congress to direct or indirect aid to the countries of Indochina, [Lao Vice-Foreign Minister Khamphay Boupha] referred to his recent meeting with Frederick Brown (the officer in charge of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam affairs at the U.S. State Department) during the latter’s visit to Vientiane. “I told him that the US talks a lot about human rights, but what would they do in the face of a situation like ours?”

“The US has dropped 3 million tons of bombs—one ton per head—forced 700,000 peasants to abandon their fields; thousands of people were killed and maimed, and unexploded ordnance continues to take its toll. Surely the US does not show humanitarian concern by refusing to help heal the wounds of war.” Khamphay revealed that Brown had asked them to wait for a period—and in the meanwhile, he wryly added, “they have forced Thailand to close the border.”³⁸

Meanwhile the people of Laos die from malnutrition, disease, and unexploded ordnance, arousing no sympathy in the country that bears a substantial responsibility for their plight with its “clowning of the CIA,” and now coldly withholds aid because, as the press sees it, Hanoi refuses to join the community of “responsible nations.” The 240,000 of 850,000 infants who will die before their first birthday in the next five years (see page 140), and the many others who will expire with them, may be added to the accounts of imperial savagery, quickly forgotten by Western humanitarians.

But the efforts to rebuild continue:

The problem is the shortage of essential tools, draught animals and the costly legacy of war—unexploded ammunition. One official of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees who recently visited newly-resettled areas on the Plain of Jars described efforts to grow food in small patches of land in a dusty bomb-cratered landscape.

The official gave the example of Muong Pek, with a population of 33,000, out of which 25,000 were displaced persons who returned to their villages after the war. Before the war, the population of the district owned 83,000 buffaloes to provide draught power and meat. When peace came there were only 250 buffaloes.

Although the number has since gone up to 2,000, it is still inadequate for ploughing the hardened soil abandoned for years. In some places, men have to strap themselves to a plough to turn the earth. Last year, not surprisingly, the peasants in the area produced only enough rice for between two and four months. In one commune in the district with a population of 3,500, 15 people were killed by ammunition left after the war.³⁹

A few months later Chanda visited the Plain of Jars, “the scene of some of the heaviest bombing during the Indochina War,” where “people are making a start on reviving what was once a prosperous rural society.”⁴⁰ From the air, the Plain of Jars “resembles a lunar landscape, pockmarked as it is with bomb craters that are a stark testimony to the years of war that denuded the area of people and buildings,” a consequence of “six years of ‘secret’ bombing” by U.S. aircraft.⁴¹ “At ground level, the signs of death and destruction are even more ubiquitous.” The province capital was “completely razed.” “But the once-flourishing rural society of the plain is slowly coming back to life, raising bamboo-and-mud houses on the ruins of the old, reclaiming abandoned rice paddies, turning bomb craters into fish ponds, and weeding out the deadly debris of war that litters the area.” Thousands are now returning from refugee camps and “many have emerged from their forest shelters and caves in the surrounding mountains” to villages where sometimes “not even a broken wall is to be seen.” The peasants of one village have to work in rice fields 15 kilometers away because “heavy bombing in the nearby mountains brought hundreds of tons of mud hurtling down into the river that once irrigated” their paddy fields. A peasant who joined

the Pathet Lao, recruited by U.S. bombs, recalls the day when a U.S. jet “scored a direct rocket hit on a cave in which 137 women and children of the village, including his own, were hiding. The cave was so hot from the explosion, he says, that for more than a day he could not go near it.” Today, “death still lurks in every corner of the plain” in the form of such “war debris” as “golf-ball size bombs containing explosives and steel bits released from a large canister” and other products of American ingenuity that killed thousands during the war, and continue to exact their deadly toll.⁴²

There are Vietnamese present, Chanda observes; namely “Vietnamese workers and soldiers” who are “building schools and hospitals, improving the road network...repairing roads and bridges,” and “were never seen carrying guns.” “If any Soviet experts were in the area, they were well hidden,” and there were few “visible items of Soviet assistance.” There are slow efforts to introduce cooperative stores and cooperative farming, facilitated by “the economic dislocation caused by the US in its attempt to defeat communism” which makes it easy to persuade “villagers to pool their resources” in construction and farming. “Despite moves towards a Marxist-Leninist order, socialism in Laos remains a typically soft, Lao variety which does not conform to the rigid dialectical materialism of European Marxists.” Traditional ceremonies are preserved—at least that should please Harry Reasoner.

Louis and Eryl Kubicka visited the Plain of Jars on the same trip. They quote Chit Kham, whose wife and three daughters were among the 137 people killed when an F105 jet bomber “succeeded in hitting the cave entrance with three out of four rockets it fired, according to an eyewitness with whom we spoke...whose job it was to monitor the bombing from a tree-top perch.” Asked what the United States might do “to regain the respect of the people here,” Chit Kham answered: “Of course we want aid, but they have killed us, so many lives were lost...we want back those lives that were lost.”⁴³ Kubicka also describes the vast destruction, the unexploded ordnance (his wife “found a CBU bomblet [by nearly stepping on it]”), the “billions of pieces of shrapnel scattered over” the province, “the lack of pulling power” because of the killing of buffaloes. He left believing “that few Americans could personally visit here and see what we saw with the quiet amicable people who hosted us, without feeling a sense of basic human sympathy, or without being ready to lend a helping hand.”

Earlier, Kubicka had published a report from Vientiane on the U.S. program of bombing the peasant society of northern Laos and the Lao efforts to reconstruct. He quotes a UN official who had returned from the Plain of Jars, where some refugees had already

been resettled: “I’ve seen a lot of refugee situations in my time throughout the world, but this is the best organization I’ve ever seen. If this is what Laos is going to be like in the future, we’re going to see some significant development here.” But of course assistance will be needed: “Conspicuously absent from the list of those proffering assistance is the United States,” Kubicka comments, adding that “every other major nation represented diplomatically in Vientiane is currently providing Laos with some aid.”⁴⁴

The November 1977 visit was the first by journalists to the Plain of Jars, an area which, for people who have freed themselves from the Western system of indoctrination, has come to symbolize the terror that can be visited by an advanced industrial society on defenseless peasants. To our knowledge, no word about it appeared in the mainstream media, which continue to guard their secrets.

The Hieberts described this visit to the Plain of Jars on their return to the United States from Vientiane in January, 1978 (see note 6). They too describe in detail the ravages of U.S. bombing and the efforts to reconstruct, with the assistance of Vietnamese workers who are, according to Vietnamese diplomats, “fulfilling their two years of national service by working in Laos.” The Hieberts, who were engaged in relief work in Laos, also describe the attempts of the new regime to undertake rehabilitation of the human debris of war—orphans, drug addicts, and others—and to bring health services to the countryside, and the problems caused by severe drought, the withdrawal of U.S. aid from the artificial economy it had created, and the “on and off blockade by Thailand,” which in September, 1977, blocked fuel imports from Singapore, Swedish road-building supplies, 2,000 tons of rice donated by the UN for refugees, \$100,000 worth of medicines, and drought-related equipment and supplies.

No U.S. government aid had to be obstructed.

Cambodia

The third victim of U.S. aggression and savagery in Indochina, Cambodia, falls into a different category than postwar Vietnam and Laos.¹ While the Western propaganda system has selected and modified information about Vietnam to convey the required image of a country suffering under Communist tyranny—the sole source of its current problems—it has been unable to conjure up the bloodbath that was confidently predicted (Laos, as usual, is rarely noticed at all). In fact, by historical standards, the treatment of collaborators in postwar Vietnam has been relatively mild, as the precedents reviewed indicate, though the provocation for merciless revenge was incomparably greater than in the instances we surveyed. But in the case of Cambodia, there is no difficulty in documenting major atrocities and oppression, primarily from the reports of refugees, since Cambodia has been almost entirely closed to the West since the war's end.

One might imagine that in the United States, which bears a major responsibility for what François Ponchaud calls “the calvary of a people,”² reporting and discussion would be tinged with guilt and regret. That has rarely been the case, however. The U.S. role and responsibility have been quickly forgotten or even explicitly denied as the mills of the propaganda machine grind away. From the spectrum of informed opinion, only the most extreme condemnations have been selected, magnified, distorted, and hammered into popular consciousness through endless repetition. Questions that are obviously crucial even apart from the legacy of the war—for example, the sources of the policies of the postwar Cambodian regime in historical experience, traditional culture, Khmer nationalism, or internal social conflict—have been passed by in silence as the propaganda machine gravitates to the evils of a competitive socioeconomic system so as to establish its basic principle: that “liberation” by “Marxists” is the worst fate that can befall any people under Western dominance.

The record of atrocities in Cambodia is substantial and often gruesome, but it has by no means satisfied the requirements of Western propagandists, who must labor to shift the blame for the torment of Indochina to the victims of France and the United States. Consequently, there has been extensive fabrication of evidence, a tide that is not stemmed even by repeated exposure. Furthermore, more tempered and cautious assessments are given little notice, as is evidence that runs contrary to the chorus of denunciation that has dominated the Western media. The coverage of real and fabricated atrocities in Cambodia

also stands in dramatic contrast to the silence with regard to atrocities comparable in scale within U.S. domains—Timor, for example. This coverage has conferred on that land of much suffering the distinction of being perhaps the most extensively reported Third World country in U.S. journalism. At the same time, propagandists in the press and elsewhere, recognizing a good thing when they see it, like to pretend that their lone and courageous voice of protest can barely be heard, or alternatively, that controversy is raging about events in postwar Cambodia.³

Critics of U.S. violence find themselves in a curious position in this connection. Generally ignored by the press, they find that in this case their comment is eagerly sought out in the hope that they will deny atrocity reports, so that this denial can be featured as “proof” that inveterate apologists for Communism will never learn and never cease their sleazy efforts, which create such problems for the honorable seekers after truth who must somehow penetrate the barriers erected by those who “defend Cambodia.”⁴ When no real examples can be found, the Free Press resorts to the familiar device of invention; the alleged views of critics of the propaganda barrage who do exist are known primarily through ritual denunciation rather than direct exposure. Or there are somber references to unnamed people who “make use of the deaths of millions of Khmers to defend [their] own theories or projects for society.”⁵

Another common device is to thunder that the doves “had better explain” why there has been a bloodbath,⁶ or “concede” that their “support for the Communists”—the standard term for opposition to U.S. subversion and aggression—was wrong; it is the critics who must, it is claimed, shoulder the responsibility for the consequences of U.S. intervention, not those who organized and supported it or concealed the facts concerning it for many years, and still do.

It is, surely, not in doubt that it was U.S. intervention that inflamed a simmering civil struggle and brought the horrors of modern warfare to relatively peaceful Cambodia, at the same time arousing violent hatreds and a thirst for revenge in the demolished villages where the Khmer Rouge were recruited by the bombardment of the U.S. and its local clients. Matters have reached such a point that a social democratic journal can organize a symposium on the quite astounding question of whether opposition to the U.S. war in Indochina should be reassessed, given its consequences in Cambodia.⁷ Others claim that the scale of the atrocities in Cambodia or their nature—peasant revenge or systematic state-organized murder—does not really matter; it is enough that atrocities have occurred, a stance that would be rejected with amazement and contempt if adopted with regard to

benign or constructive bloodbaths.

Predictably, the vast outcry against alleged genocide in Cambodia led to calls for military intervention in the U.S. Congress; we will comment no further on the fact that such a proposal can be voiced in the Congress of the United States or what the fact implies in the light of recent history. A look at some of these proposals reveals how effectively any concern for mere fact has been submerged in the tide of propaganda.

Representative Stephen J. Solarz raised the question “of some kind of international police action under the auspices of the United Nations.”⁸ This proposal was advanced during the testimony of Gareth Porter, who had exposed earlier bloodbath lies and also raised doubts about the evidence offered in connection with Cambodia.⁹ As evidence for the genocidal nature of the Cambodian regime, Solarz cited “Khieu Samphan’s interview with Oriana Fallaci” in which he allegedly acknowledged “that somewhere in the vicinity of 1 million had been killed since the war.” As Porter commented in response, the interview was not with Oriana Fallaci, contained no such “acknowledgement,” and is at best of very dubious origin and authenticity, as we discuss below. Undeterred, Solarz raised the question of international intervention.

In congressional hearings a year later, Senator George McGovern gained wide—and unaccustomed—publicity when he suggested military intervention during the testimony of Douglas Pike, who is described in the press as a “State Department Indochina specialist.”¹⁰ According to an AP report, McGovern “called yesterday for international military intervention in Cambodia to stop what he called ‘a clear case of genocide,’” citing “estimates that as many as 2.5 million of Cambodia’s 7 million people have died of starvation, disease and execution since the Communist takeover three years ago.” He is quoted as follows:

This is the most extreme I’ve ever heard of...Based on the percentage of the population that appears to have died, this makes Hitler’s operation look tame...Is any thought being given...of sending in a force to knock this government out of power? I’m talking about an international peacekeeping force, not the United States going in with the Marine Corps.¹¹

McGovern went on to speak of the “crime when an estimated two million innocent Cambodians are systematically slaughtered or starved by their own rulers,” a case of “genocidal conduct” that cannot be ignored by “the United States, as a leading proponent of human rights.”¹² On CBS television the same day he said that “here you have a situation where in a country of seven million people, possibly as many as a third of them have been systematically slaughtered by their own government,” that is, “by a band of murderers that’s taken over that government.”¹³ He returned to the same theme a few days

later, informing the Congress that “a band of murderous thugs has been systematically killing their fellow citizens. Two million Cambodians are said to have been destroyed.”¹⁴

If 2-2½ million people, about 1/3 of the population, have been systematically slaughtered by a band of murderous thugs who have taken over the government, then McGovern is willing to consider international military intervention. We presume that he would not have made this proposal if the figure of those killed were, say, less by a factor of 100—that is 25,000 people—though this would be bad enough.¹⁵ Nor would he have been likely to propose this extreme measure if the deaths in Cambodia were not the result of systematic slaughter and starvation organized by the state but rather attributable in large measure to peasant revenge, undisciplined military units out of government control, starvation and disease that are direct consequences of the U.S. war, or other such factors. Nor has McGovern, or anyone else, called for military intervention to cut short the apparent massacre of something like one-sixth of the population of East Timor in the course of the Indonesian invasion, though in this case a mere show of displeasure by the government that provides the military equipment and the diplomatic and economic support for these atrocities might well suffice to bring the murderous attack to a halt.

Assuming then that facts do matter, we naturally ask what McGovern’s basis may have been for the specific allegations that he put forth. An inquiry to his office in Washington elicited no source for these charges or documentary evidence to substantiate them. It is interesting that McGovern’s call for intervention, widely discussed in the press (occasionally, with some derision because of his record as a dove), has not been criticized on grounds that he seems to have had no serious basis for his charges. Nor did any journalist, to our knowledge, report an inquiry to McGovern to determine what evidence, if any, lay behind the specific factual claims that he put forth in calling for military intervention. (At our urging, one TV newsman has made such an inquiry, and was informed by the staff that his source may have been Lon Nol! For the sake of McGovern’s reputation, we would prefer to believe that the numbers were invented).¹⁶

On the assumption that facts do matter, we will inquire into the reporting of postwar Cambodia in the Western (primarily U.S.) media. We concede at once that for those who “know the truth” irrespective of the facts, this inquiry will appear to be of little moment. As in the other cases discussed, our primary concern here is not to establish the facts with regard to postwar Indochina, but rather to investigate their refraction through the prism of Western ideology, a very different task. We will consider the kinds of evidence used by the media and those naive enough to place their faith in them, and the selection of evidence

from what is available. We will see that the general theory of the Free Press, well-supported by what we have already reviewed, is once again dramatically confirmed: the more severe the allegations of crimes committed by an enemy, the greater (in general) the attention they receive. Exposure of falsehoods is considered largely irrelevant. The situation is rather different from the manufacture of Hun atrocities during World War I, to take an example already discussed, since at that time the falsehoods were exposed only years after—in this case, they continue to surface though refuted at once. The U.S. responsibility is largely ignored, though critics such as Jean Lacouture are not guilty of this incredible moral lapse,¹⁷ and virtually no effort is made to consider postwar Cambodia, or the credibility of evidence concerning it, in the light of historical experience such as that reviewed in chapter 2.

Ponchaud comments that there is a *prima facie* case in support of atrocity allegations: “the exodus of over one hundred thousand persons is a fact, and a bulky one, that raises enough questions in itself.”¹⁸ We would add that by parity of argument, the same considerations apply elsewhere; the exodus of approximately one hundred thousand persons fleeing from the victors of the American revolution also raises questions, particularly when we recall that the white population was about 2½ million as compared with 7-8 million Cambodians and that this was after a war that was far less bitterly fought and lacked any comparable atrocities by foreign powers.¹⁹

Most of the well-publicized information concerning postwar Cambodia derives from reports of refugees—or to be more precise, from accounts by journalists and others of what refugees are alleged to have said. On the basis of such reports, these observers draw conclusions about the scale and character of atrocities committed in Cambodia, conclusions which are then circulated (often modified) in the press or the halls of Congress. For example, Barron-Paul present some examples of what they claim to have heard from refugees and then conclude that the government of Cambodia is bent on genocide, a conclusion which is then presented in various forms by commentators. Similarly Ponchaud cites examples of refugee reports and concludes that the government is engaged in “the assassination of a people,” giving estimates of the numbers executed or otherwise victims of centralized government policies. Reviewers and other commentators then inform the public that Ponchaud has shown that the Cambodian government, with its policies of autogenocide, is on a par with the Nazis, perhaps worse. With each link in the chain of transmission, the charges tend to escalate, as we shall see.

Evidently, a serious inquiry into the facts and the way they are depicted should deal

with several issues: (1) the nature of the refugee testimony; (2) the media selection from the evidence available; (3) the credibility of those who transmit their version of refugee reports and draw conclusions from them; (4) the further interpretations offered by commentators on the basis of what evidence they select and present. We will concentrate on the third and fourth issues. But a few observations are in order about the first and second.

It is a truism, obvious to anyone who has ever dealt with refugees or considers the historical record or simply uses common sense, that “the accounts of refugees are indeed to be used with great care.”²⁰ It is a truism commonly ignored. For example, the *New York Times* Pulitzer prize-winning specialist on refugees from Communism interviewed Cambodian refugees in Thailand “in a cage 8 feet square and 10 feet high in the police station of this provincial capital,” where “9 men are huddled on the bare floor” rarely speaking and staring “into the narrow space before them with dulled eyes.”²¹ It does not occur to him, here or elsewhere, to treat the accounts offered under such circumstances with the “great care” that Ponchaud properly recommends. The media favorite, Barron-Paul, is based largely on visits to refugee camps arranged in part by a representative of the Thai Ministry of the Interior, whose “knowledge and advice additionally provided us with invaluable guidance.”²² In the camps to which they gained access with the help of this Thai official, who is responsible for internal security matters including anti-Communist police and propaganda operations, they “approached the camp leader elected by the Cambodians and from his knowledge of his people compiled a list of refugees who seemed to be promising subjects”²³—one can easily imagine which “subjects” would seem “promising” to these earnest seekers after truth, to whom we return. Citing this comment,²⁴ Porter points out that “the Khmer camp chief works closely with and in subordination to Thai officials who run the camps and with the Thai government-supported anti-Communist Cambodian organization carrying out harassment and intelligence operations in Cambodia.” The camps and their leaders are effectively under Thai control and the refugees who eke out a miserable existence there are subject to the whims of the passionately anti-Communist Thai authorities, a point that should be obvious to journalists and should suggest some caution, but is entirely ignored by Barron-Paul, as well as by many others. The story is just too useful to be treated with the requisite care.

Ponchaud, who is more serious, describes the treatment of the refugees in Thailand: they spend a week or more in prison before being sent to camps where they are “fed increasingly short rations” and “have to offer some token of gratitude to the camp guards

for letting them out to look for work.” He continues:

There is little hope for them. They live with their memories, constantly reliving the horrors they have witnessed. Each one recounts what he saw or heard, his imagination and homesickness tending to exaggerate and distort the facts.²⁵

Essentially the same point is made by Charles Twining, whom the State Department regards as “really the best expert [on Cambodian refugees]...that exists in the world today.”²⁶ Stating that executions continue, he says that “we hear about executions from refugees who have just come out. You must talk to a refugee as soon as he comes out or the story may become exaggerated.”²⁷ How exaggerated it may become by the time it reaches Barron-Paul or Kamm, the reader may try to estimate. The issue does not concern them, judging by their reports. Nor has it concerned those who rely on and draw firm conclusions from these reports.

Access to refugees is generally controlled by Thai authorities or their subordinates (to speak of “election,” as Barron-Paul do without qualification, is odd indeed under these circumstances). The translators also presumably fall in this category, or are believed to by the refugees who depend for survival on the grace of their supervisors. Clearly, these are unpromising circumstances for obtaining a meaningful record—compare in contrast, the circumstances of the Bryce report with its record of apparent fabrications.²⁸ Ponchaud is unusual in making the obvious point that great care must be exercised. Clearly, the reports of refugees should be carefully heeded, but the potential for abuse is great, and those who want to use them with propagandistic intent can do so without serious constraint.

Not surprisingly, there are many internal contradictions in refugee reports. In the *May Hearings* Porter cites the case of Chou Try, who told a CBS reporter that he had witnessed the beating to death of five students by Khmer Rouge soldiers. In October 1976, he told Patrice de Beer of *Le Monde* that he had witnessed no executions though he had heard rumors of them.²⁹ Porter notes that he was “chosen to be the Khmer chief” of the refugee camp at Aranyaphrathet, where a great many of the interviews have taken place. There are many similar examples. As Porter and Retbøll both insist, refugee reports should certainly not be disregarded, but some care is in order. Evidently, interviews arranged under the circumstances described by Kamm or Barron-Paul are of limited credibility.

One refugee who became both well-known and influential in the United States is Pin Yathai. At a press conference held under the auspices of the American Security Council, Yathai, described as “one of his country’s top civil engineers and a leading member of the government” who escaped to Thailand in June of 1977, testified that people were reduced

to cannibalism under Khmer Rouge rule.³⁰ “A teacher ate the flesh of her own sister” and was later caught and beaten to death as an example, he alleged, citing also another case of cannibalism in a hospital and other stories of starvation, brutality, and disease.³¹ He was interviewed by Jack Anderson on ABC television,³² and his stories were also featured in the mass circulation *TV Guide* in “an article on the paucity of media coverage of the Cambodian holocaust by Patrick Buchanan,” one of Nixon’s speechwriters.³³ Later, they became the basis for a substantial right wing attack on the *Washington Post* for its failure to cover Pin Yathai’s news conference, and in general, to give what these groups regard as adequate coverage to Cambodian atrocities. *Le Monde* also published two articles based on Pin Yathai’s allegations as well as a letter from another Cambodian attacking his credibility and accusing him of having been a member of the “Special Committee” of the Lon Nol government that was engaged in counterespionage, assassinations, perhaps the drug traffic, and was believed to have been funded by the CIA.³⁴

The right wing *Bangkok Post* did report the press conference in which Pin Yathai presented his account of cannibalism and other horrors.³⁵ The *Bangkok Post* story observed that “Cambodian refugees in Thailand yesterday discounted reports that cannibalism is frequent in Cambodia and even doubted if it has occurred at all.” It also quoted “another Cambodian civil engineer who had long talks with Pin Yathai while he was in Bangkok” and who told AFP: “No more than 40 per cent of the statement Pin Yathai made in the United States is true. He never went so far while talking to fellow refugees in his own language.” This information was not circulated by Accuracy in Media in its attacks on the *Washington Post* nor has it been presented by others who gave wide publicity to Pin Yathai’s accounts.

Not all refugees are welcomed so eagerly as Pin Yathai. Consider, for example, a story in the *London Times* on a Vietnamese refugee who escaped from Vietnam through Cambodia to Thailand, which he entered in April 1976.³⁶ He walked 350 miles through Cambodia over a two-month period.³⁷ A civil engineer “with high qualifications” who speaks French, Thai, Khmer and Lao in addition to English, this refugee with his unique experience in postwar Cambodia, where “because of his fluency in Khmer and local knowledge he was taken everywhere for a Cambodian,” seems a prime candidate for interviews in the press. But, in fact, he never made it to the *New York Times*, *Time*, *TV Guide*, or other U.S. media. His lack of qualifications are revealed by his comments when he arrived in Thailand, where he heard stories of massacres in Cambodia:

I could not believe it. Walking across the country for two months I saw no sign of killing or mass extermination and nobody I spoke to told me of it. I still don’t believe it happened.

Note that the observations of this man, a middle-class refugee from Vietnam with the appropriate anti-Communist credentials, do not contradict the stories of brutal atrocities told in profusion by refugees. Rather, they are consistent with the remarks by State Department Cambodia watchers and other specialists on the geographical limitations of the worst atrocity stories, and suggest that there may be a good deal of local variation rather than the coordinated campaign of state-directed genocide that the media and their main sources prefer. But this very fact suffices to consign this report to oblivion in the United States, despite its undoubted significance as a rare window on inner Cambodia from what appears to be a fairly credible source. We will return to other examples, merely noting here the striking contrast between the media exposure in this case and in the case of Pin Yathai.

In fact, even the witnesses who are specifically selected to recount atrocity stories often add significant qualifications. For example, one of the witnesses at the Oslo Hearings on Human Rights Violations in Cambodia held in April 1978, was Lim Pech Kuon, who said that he “well understood” the Khmer Rouge policy. He asserted, “that he had never heard the Khmer Rouge indicate that they intended to kill all classes except the workers and poor peasants”:

It was perhaps more correct to say that, in the Khmer Rouge interpretations, the relics of the classes would be abolished—not eradicated. He also said that he had never seen an execution with his own eyes. When he arrived in Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge victory he had seen a number of corpses in the streets, but the corpses were covered, and so he could not see whether they were soldiers or civilians. He made it clear that it was the lack of freedom which made him flee by helicopter.³⁸

While the media give the impression that refugees have uniformly recounted stories of horrible atrocities, journalists have occasionally noticed that the reports are actually more varied. John Fraser of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, whose reports from Vietnam we discussed briefly in chapter 4, also visited a Cambodian refugee camp in Vietnam, “fully prepared for a host of atrocity stories about mass executions, bloody beheadings and savage Khmer Rouge brutality,” particularly since the camp was only 50 miles from the border where there had been “deadly combat”:

To my surprise I got lots of tales of hardship, but no atrocities save for a second-hand account of an execution of two men. The accounts of life in Cambodia were grim enough and the atrocity stories too well authenticated to doubt, but still no one at that camp was able to tell me one. I finally had to ask if there was anyone who knew of an execution and after some time I got the second-hand story. I offer no conclusions on this singular fact, except that it was strange with so many refugees not to be able to get more information, particularly since it would have been useful for Vietnamese propaganda.³⁹

We know of only one Khmer-speaking Westerner who is an academic specialist on Cambodia and has visited refugee camps in Thailand without the supervision of authorities, namely, Michael Vickery, who reports as follows on his August 1976 visit:

Since I speak Khmer I was something of a curiosity for them and it was easy to gather a crowd around and listen to what they said whether in response to questions or to unorganized conversation. It was soon clear that there was much disagreement among the refugees about conditions in Cambodia. Some pushed the brutality line, others denied it, or emphasized that killings were rare and due to the cruelty of a few individual leaders. Thus many of the refugees admitted that they had left because they disliked the rigorous working life under the new regime, not because they were themselves threatened with death or brutality. So much, though, was already apparent from a close reading of newspaper accounts. What I found more intriguing was that once when alone with one of the men he called attention to the lack of agreement and added that it was never noticed by outsiders because they didn't understand Khmer. According to him, camp authorities had organized French and English speaking refugees as informants to give the official line to journalists who came to visit.⁴⁰

We return to Vickery's published and private comments, which are valuable and very much to the point.

Not everyone who is interested in analyzing refugee accounts is permitted the kind of access offered by the Thai Ministry of Interior to Barron and Paul. Cornell University Cambodian specialist Stephen Heder, who was a journalist in Phnom Penh, speaks and reads Khmer, is the author of articles on contemporary Cambodia—and has been notably skeptical about the standard conclusions drawn by journalists after guided tours through refugee camps—received funding from the Social Science Research Council and the Fulbright-Hays Program to do a systematic study of postwar Cambodia based on refugee testimony and Phnom Penh Radio broadcasts. He was informed by the Secretary-General of the National Research Council of Thailand that “the present political situations [sic] in Thailand do not favour us to consider this type of research. Therefore, if you still have an intention to do a research works [sic] in Thailand, please be advised to change your topic.” One way to give the impression that refugee stories consistently and without exception report atrocities is to prevent competent researchers fluent in Khmer, who do not need the guidance of Thai ministers or “elected camp commanders,” from examining the evidence for themselves. We have no doubt that when Heder publishes on contemporary Cambodia, his work will be criticized by those who do not approve of his conclusions on the grounds that he “ignores refugee data.”

To summarize, several points are worth noting. Refugee reports are to be taken seriously, but with care. In their eagerness to obtain “evidence” that could be used to defame the regime in Cambodia, such reporters as Barron and Paul or Henry Kamm, as their own testimony indicates, failed to observe the most obvious and elementary cautions that should be second nature to any serious journalist and that are specifically emphasized by Ponchaud, Twining, and others. The media, furthermore, have their own criteria for deciding which reports to emphasize and which to ignore. To evaluate refugee reports it is necessary to take into account extreme bias both in selection of stories and treatment of them. The apparent uniformity of refugee testimony is in part at least an artifact reflecting

media bias. In particular, it would be difficult to construct an argument in support of the thesis of central direction and planning of atrocities on the basis of alleged uniformity of refugee reports, since in fact there appears to be considerable variety; to sustain such a thesis other evidence is required, for example, documentary evidence. The unwillingness of the Thai authorities to permit independent scholarly study also raises questions, given the obvious interest of the Thai—shared by Western media and governments—in presenting the worst possible picture of postwar Cambodia. We will consider these questions in more detail below, but even a brief look at the handling of refugee reports suggests that a degree of caution is in order.

Refugee reports constitute one essential category of information about a society as closed to the outside as postwar Cambodia has been. The second link in the chain of transmission of information, which in this case is subject to some independent check for credibility, is the reporters and others who transmit their stories. To inquire into their credibility is surely a crucial matter in evaluating the material that reaches the public. People who have expressed skepticism about the press barrage are commonly accused of refusing to believe the accounts of miserable refugees, a line that is much easier to peddle than the truth: that they are primarily raising questions about the credibility of those who report—and perhaps exploit—the suffering of the refugees and what they are alleged to have said.⁴¹ When refugee stories are transmitted by reporters of demonstrated integrity,⁴² they merit more serious attention than when the account is given by someone who is otherwise unknown or has an obvious axe to grind. When a reporter from *Pravda* describes the horrors of U.S. bombing in Northern Laos, a rational observer will be more skeptical than when similar eyewitness reports are provided by Jacques Decornay of *Le Monde*.⁴³ Similarly, when Leo Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee, discusses the barbarism of the Khmer Rouge,⁴⁴ a rational reader will recall the previous history of this longtime apologist for U.S. violence and oppression who attempts to disguise this miserable display under a humanitarian cloak—for example, his supremely cynical description of the victims of U.S. bombings in South Vietnam: “There are more than 700,000 additional refugees who have recently fled the countryside dominated by the Vietcong and with their act of flight have chosen the meager sanctuary provided by the government of South Vietnam.”⁴⁵

To determine the credibility of those who transmit reports is a critical matter for anyone concerned to discover the truth, either about Cambodia or about the current phase of imperial ideology. There is only one way to investigate this question: namely, to pay

careful attention to the use of quotes and evidence. Such an inquiry may seem pointless or irrelevant, or even cruel, to people who are quite certain that they already know the truth. Lacouture expresses feelings that are not uncommon in his “Corrections”:

Faced with an enterprise as monstrous as the new Cambodian government, should we see the main problem as one of deciding exactly which person uttered an inhuman phrase, and whether the regime has murdered thousands or hundreds of thousands of wretched people? Is it of crucial historical importance to know whether the victims of Dachau numbered 100,000 or 500,000. Or if Stalin had 1,000 or 10,000 Poles shot at Katyn?⁴⁶

Or perhaps, we may add, whether the victims of My Lai numbered in the hundreds, as reported, or tens of thousands, or whether the civilians murdered in Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS numbered 5,000 or 500,000, if a factor of 100 is relatively insignificant?⁴⁷ If facts are so unimportant, then why bother to present alleged facts at all?

If, indeed, the Cambodian regime was, as Lacouture believes, as monstrous as the Nazis at their worst, then his comment might be comprehensible, though it is worth noting that he has produced no evidence to support this judgment.⁴⁸ But if a more appropriate comparison is, say, to France after liberation, where a minimum of 30-40,000 people were massacred within a few months with far less motive for revenge and under far less rigorous conditions than those left by the U.S. war in Cambodia, then perhaps a rather different judgment is in order.⁴⁹ As we shall see, there is a considerable range of opinion on this score among qualified observers, though the press has favored Lacouture’s conclusion, generally ignoring mere questions of fact.

We disagree with Lacouture’s judgment on the importance of accuracy on this question, particularly in the present historical context, when allegations of genocide are being used to whitewash Western imperialism, to distract attention from the “institutionalized violence” of the expanding system of subfascism and to lay the ideological basis for further intervention and oppression. We have seen how effectively the Western propaganda system creates, embroiders, plays up, distorts, and suppresses evidence according to imperial needs. Western domination of world communications adds to the importance of closely evaluating evidence that so conveniently meets pressing ideological requirements. In this context, it becomes a question of some interest whether in Cambodia, for example, a gang of Marxist murderers are systematically engaged in what Lacouture calls “autogenocide”—“the suicide of a people in the name of revolution; worse, in the name of socialism”⁵⁰—or whether the worst atrocities have taken place at the hands of a peasant army, recruited and driven out of their devastated villages by U.S. bombs and then taking revenge against the urban civilization that they regarded, not without reason, as a collaborator in their destruction and their long history of oppression. Future victims of

imperial savagery will not thank us for assisting in the campaign to restore the public to apathy and conformism so that the subjugation of the weak can continue without annoying domestic impediments. Especially in such countries as France and the United States—to mention only two international gangsters whose post-World War II depredations are not dismissed so quickly by past and potential victims as they are at home—it is a crucially important matter to be quite scrupulous with regard to fact, to pay careful attention to past history and to subject to critical analysis whatever information is available about the current situation.⁵¹

Attention to fact was a particularly significant matter under the conditions of 1975-78, when extreme and unsupported allegations could be used to support military intervention, not a small consideration as we see from McGovern's statements already discussed or—more significantly, as recent history shows—from the context of the Vietnamese invasion discussed in the preface to this volume.

Quite apart from these considerations, which seem to us rather important, it is surely worthwhile, if one is going to discuss Cambodia at all, to try to comprehend what has in fact taken place there, which is quite impossible if critical standards are abandoned and “facts” are contrived even out of honest anger or distress.

The inquiry to which we now turn will appear to be a pointless exegetical exercise to people who share Lacouture's judgment or for whom facts are simply an irrelevant nuisance, like the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*. While the latter reaction merits no comment, Lacouture's is not so quickly dismissed, though we feel that it is deeply wrong in the case of an investigation of postwar Cambodia, and entirely untenable if one is concerned—as we are here—with the workings of the Western propaganda system.

There is a related methodological point that merits comment, if only because it is so commonly misunderstood. Plainly, we may divide the evidence available into two categories: (1) evidence subject to some independent verification; (2) evidence that must be taken on faith. A person who is at all serious will concentrate on category (1) in trying to determine how much trust to place in unverifiable reports of category (2).⁵² If it turns out that some source is quite untrustworthy when claims can be checked, then naturally one will view with corresponding skepticism reports from this source that are subject to no such check. But in the sources that raise the charge of genocide, the overwhelming bulk of the evidence is of category (2). Therefore it is easy to be misled into thinking that even if the evidence of category (1) does not withstand critical analysis, the matter is of no serious import since it is of such a minor nature as compared with the far more serious (and

unverifiable) charges. A moment's thought should suffice to show that this conclusion is entirely untenable; nevertheless, as we shall see, it is not at all uncommon.

Let us return now to McGovern's call for intervention and the press reaction to it. McGovern provided no source for his estimate of 2-2½ million systematically killed by thugs who had taken over the government of Cambodia, though such charges have been bandied about widely in the press since immediately after the Khmer Rouge victory.⁵³ Nor did McGovern attempt to sort out the relative proportions of those who were killed by government plan or edict or in random acts of violence (evidently, rather different categories) as compared with those who died from malnutrition and disease.

McGovern's remarks, as well as much of the press commentary concerning them, amount to the claim that the population is suffering in misery under a savage oppressor bent on genocide. Mere common sense, even apart from special knowledge, should raise at least some doubts about this picture. In the first place, is it proper to attribute deaths from malnutrition and disease to the Cambodian authorities? Compare, for example, the case of Laos already discussed, where relief workers speak of hundreds of thousands of deaths from malnutrition and disease as a legacy of colonialism and more specifically, the U.S. attack on a defenseless society, while the United States withholds desperately needed aid. It surely should occur to a journalist or the reader to ask how many of the deaths in Cambodia fall to the U.S. account. There is evidence on this matter, but it is systematically excluded from the press. Or, one might wonder, how can it be that a population so oppressed by a handful of fanatics does not rise up to overthrow them? In fact, even in the hearings where McGovern reported the estimates of 2½ million deaths attributable to the Khmer Rouge and "called for international military intervention," the State Department response should have aroused some questions in the mind of a moderately serious reporter. Douglas Pike, responding to McGovern, said that "the notion of a quick, surgical takeout of the government of Cambodia probably is not possible":

He pointed to Cambodia's unique government consisting of a ruling group of nine men at the center and communal government 'in the style of the 14th century' in the villages, with no regional or provincial governments in between... "To take over Cambodia you're going to have to take over the villages—all of them," he said.⁵⁴

Evidently there must be at least some support for the group of nine men at the center if it will be necessary to take over every village to overthrow their rule. The quandary has been expressed by other State Department experts. Charles Twining, who says that he was "sent to Bangkok [by the State Department] as the Indochina watcher with responsibility primarily for finding out what is happening in Cambodia and Vietnam," made the

following remark in response to Rep. Solarz's query as to "how people at the top manage to establish their authority over these young soldiers out in the villages who are carrying out this policy of extermination":

It is a difficult question. We know the levels of administration in Cambodia; it goes from the central to the region to the sector to the district to the commune to the village. Presumably, then, there are loyal people at all of these levels. What really binds together these largely Paris-educated fanatics at the top with almost purposefully ignorant farm boys at the bottom who are the ones with the guns carrying out their orders—I really don't know what it is that keeps them together and I wonder in the future how long something like this can continue, how long that glue can hold.⁵⁵

It is, indeed, "a difficult question."

Similar doubts were raised by experts close to the U.S. government during the earlier *May Hearings*. In response to Rep. Solarz's remarks about possible intervention, Peter A. Poole, formerly a Foreign Service Officer in Cambodia and now a professor of international relations at American University, said that "I think that an international police force would be one of the worst possible things we could do." On the evacuation of Phnom Penh, he said: "They obviously overdid it. They obviously did it very badly. But the general thrust of moving people out of the city was something that practically any regime would have contemplated and done at some stage in that year, getting the people back on the land and producing rice." The Khmer Rouge, he added, "took over at a time when society was in ruins, so that there were no normal means of government...in a state of social, political, and economic chaos" and ran the country with "an ignorant peasant teen-age army, a rather large, very obedient army, well-armed and totally flexible, totally obedient to orders" who might respond to a command to march the people down the road by shooting those who do not obey. As to how the Khmer Rouge were able "to establish that sense of total discipline in the ranks of the army," Poole answered: "I don't know the answer to that question."⁵⁶

Another former Foreign Service Officer in Phnom Penh, David P. Chandler, now a senior lecturer at Monash University in Australia, added some further comments which had little impact on the subsequent proceedings:

What drove the Cambodians to kill? Paying off old scores or imaginary ones played a part, but, to a large extent, I think, American actions are to blame. From 1969 to 1973, after all, we dropped more than 500,000 tons of bombs on the Cambodian countryside. Nearly half of this tonnage fell in 1973...In those few months, we may have driven thousands of people out of their minds. We certainly accelerated the course of the revolution. According to several accounts, the leadership hardened its ideology and got rid of wavering factions during 1973 and 1974...We bombed Cambodia without knowing why, without taking note of the people we destroyed...it is ironic, to use a colorless word, for us to accuse the Cambodians of being indifferent to life when, for so many years, Cambodian lives made so little difference to us.⁵⁷

Chandler's comment was rejected by Rep. William F. Goodling on the following

grounds:

Our bombs didn't single out certain segments or certain peoples in Cambodia. Our bombs hit them all [sic]. And whether you thought it was right or I thought it was right, the military at that particular time thought it was right.⁵⁸

The comment is a fitting one from a leading apologist for the U.S.-backed Indonesian atrocities in Timor.⁵⁹

Twining's "difficult question" is addressed in an article by Kenneth Quinn of the National Security Council Staff,⁶⁰ one of the three leading U.S. government experts on Cambodia.⁶¹ Basing himself primarily on refugees who fled Cambodia in 1973-1974, Quinn reviews Khmer Rouge programs in an effort to explain "how a small but dedicated force was able to impose a revolution on a society without widespread participation of the peasantry" and indeed in the face of strong peasant opposition. He does not remark that since his evidence derives primarily "from the in-depth interviewing of selected refugees," it will obviously be negative; those who might approve of these programs are excluded from his sample. But ignoring this trivial point, Quinn states that "the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that the peasantry was opposed to almost all of the [Khmer Rouge] programs." Quinn discusses programs which included land reform, establishment of cooperatives, ensuring "that all citizens have roughly the same degree of wealth," obliterating class lines by confiscating property from the wealthy and compelling university students to plant and harvest rice, distributing excess crops "to feed other groups whose harvest was insufficient," etc. He notes that "as a result [of collectivization], production has outstripped previous individual efforts" and that "political-psychological [Khmer Rouge] efforts" seem to "have achieved significant results...according to all accounts" among the youth, who "were passionate in their loyalty to the state and party," "rejected the mystical aspects of religion," and "stopped working on their family plot of land and instead worked directly for the youth association on its land." He also comments that the Khmer Rouge "success is all the more amazing when it is realized that they had few, if any, cadres at the village or hamlet level...In most cases, there was no separate party existence nor were there political cadres at the village level or at any level below," though there were small, apparently locally recruited military units (in the midst of the civil war), as well as "interfamily groups" of a sort that "have existed in other Southeast Asian countries for years" and were used by the Khmer Rouge "for forcing the population to carry out a whole series of radically new programs."

Quinn then asks the "difficult question": "How did such a small group of people carry out such a varied and all-encompassing effort?" His answer is that "they cowed people and

suppressed dissent and opposition through harsh and brutal punishments; and they constructed a governmental apparatus at the village and hamlet level which allowed them to exercise tight control over every family in the area.” The possibility that some of the programs he reviewed might appeal to poor peasants is nowhere considered; it is excluded on doctrinal grounds.

Quinn claims that in 1973 the Khmer Rouge programs became extremely harsh as new cadres took over, described as “fanatics,” who were “austere” and “did not take anything for themselves and seemed willing to live a frugal life” but instituted widespread terror. Other sources, as we have seen, confirm that the Khmer Rouge programs became harsh in 1973—as the United States stepped up its murderous program of saturation bombing, a possible causal factor that Quinn is careful never to mention.

There are other aspects to the “difficult question” that properly troubled government specialists. How indeed do the Khmer Rouge manage to maintain control? Here, the refugee reports evoke some questions. For example, R.-P. Paringaux reported interviews with two high functionaries of the Lon Nol regime who had escaped to Thailand.⁶² They report that armed surveillance was “almost nonexistent” in the village to which they were sent. “In case there are problems, the village chief can call upon a militia group of 12 Khmers Rouges who maintain order in the ten villages of the sector.” One of these functionaries comments that the “old people”—those who were with the Khmer Rouge during the war—offer more support to the new regime: “they are peasants, who have always been used to hard work and to be content with little.”⁶³ It would seem not unlikely that part of the answer to the difficult question, and a reason why a dozen militiamen can maintain order in ten villages, is that the regime has a modicum of support among the peasants.

Other questions arise. If 1/3 of the population has been killed by a murderous band that has taken over the government—which somehow manages to control every village—or have died as a result of their genocidal policies, then surely one would expect if not a rebellion then at least unwillingness to fight for the Paris-educated fanatics at the top. But the confused and obscure record of the border conflicts with Thailand and Vietnam would appear to indicate that there are a substantial number of “purposefully ignorant farm boys” who have not exactly been awaiting liberation from their oppressors.⁶⁴ As Pike observed in response to McGovern’s call for intervention, the Vietnamese tried a “quick judo chop” against the Cambodian regime with 60,000 troops but “failed abysmally.”⁶⁵ Basing herself on Pike’s testimony, Susan Spencer of CBS raised the question to McGovern in a TV

interview.⁶⁶ When McGovern referred to Cambodia as “an underdeveloped country that has gotten out of control and is systematically slaughtering its own citizens,” Spencer make the following comment:

You mentioned that we should apply pressure. It seems, though, that the Vietnamese, who periodically are at war with Cambodia, have found that the Cambodian citizens, at least the villagers, seem to support the government. What lever do we have to break in—to break that?

Spencer’s question is a bit odd to begin with. If the villagers of this largely peasant society support the government, as Spencer assumes, then exactly what right do we have to find a “lever” to “break that”? And how does that alleged support square with the charge of genocide? These questions did not arise, however. McGovern simply replied that “the evidence is that about nine men are controlling that government in Cambodia” without a “loyal infrastructure out across the country” and it is “hard to believe that there’s mass support for the Cambodian government.”

The problem is implicit, though rarely discussed in these terms, in other reports concerning Cambodia. Robert Shaplen, who has been the Far Eastern correspondent for *The New Yorker* for many years, observes that in the border war with Vietnam, “the Cambodians have proved to be tough, ruthless and relentless fighters.”⁶⁷ The Southeast Asia correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* comments that “despite Vietnam’s superior size, economy, and military power, Cambodia appears to have emerged the technical ‘victor’ after the Vietnamese invasion that ended with a military withdrawal in January...In fact, Cambodian attacks across Vietnam’s borders currently are described by one analyst as ‘heavier than ever’...Vietnam appears to have underestimated the strength of Cambodian resistance, several analysts note.”⁶⁸ The continuing conflict with Thailand brings out similar anomalies. Whatever the facts may be—and they are far from clear—it seems that Cambodian forces held their own, so much so that U.S. analysts “voice skepticism about Hanoi’s ability to crush Cambodia” despite its overwhelming military advantages, because of “factors such as the apparently excellent morale of Cambodia’s ground forces.”⁶⁹

Various explanations have been offered for these facts, which at the very least raise questions about the allegations that the population is groaning under the heels of the conquerer.⁷⁰

William Buckley explains the difficulty away with resort to the mysterious Asian mind: nationalism carried to such lengths “is utterly alien to the western experience.”⁷¹ Ponchaud argues that “the old Hindu core, which regarded authority as a divine

incarnation, was still strong in the Khmers... ‘The Cambodian sticks to the rule’; The Khmer people still respect authority with a respect that to us is tinged with fatalism, even passivity, but that emanates an underlying confidence in the abilities of those in power... The underlying ideology [of the revolution] may come from somewhere else, but the methods employed show every mark of the Cambodian character,” and Khmer culture makes it possible for the authorities to rule “the countryside with terror and lies,” though “under Marxist influence, perhaps the Khmer will suddenly open a critical eye.” “Another cause of the radicality of the Khmer revolution lies in the Khmer way of reasoning, which is bewildering to Cartesian minds. The Khmer thinks by accretions or juxtapositions, but adheres strictly to the rules of his own internal logic,” apparently incapable of “Cartesian” logic.⁷²

The non-specialist may wonder about the cogency of these explanations of the “difficult question” that government specialists rightly find troubling. It is noteworthy that in the varied attempts to find a solution to this most difficult question, one conceivable hypothesis does not seem to have been considered, even to be rejected: that there was a significant degree of peasant support for the Khmer Rouge and the measures that they had instituted in the countryside.

As we begin to inquire a little further, other difficult questions arise. Consider the numbers game. What is the source of the figures invoked by the press? We shall see that the sources are obscure or misrepresented, though when corrected, they continue to surface. Furthermore, there is considerably more controversy among knowledgeable observers than the standard line of the press would indicate. For example, Lewis M. Simons, the outstanding *Washington Post* correspondent, reported from Bangkok that “disease and malnutrition combined with a dropping birthrate are taking a greater toll of Cambodia’s population than Communist executions, according to some of the latest analyses made here.” There is a

major reversal in Western judgments of what had gone on inside Democratic Kampuchea... Most Westerners who make an occupation of observing Cambodia from Thailand are talking in terms of several hundred thousand deaths from all causes. This is a marked shift from the estimates of just six months ago, when it was popular to say that anywhere between 800,000 and 1.4 million Cambodians had been executed by vengeful Communist rulers.⁷³

He also noted that “few Cambodia-watchers believe that

“The Organization” [*Angkar*, the governing group] is organized well enough to control much of the country. It is generally accepted that local military commanders, operating from jungle bases, conduct their own small-scale border rations [sic] and impose summary justice.

There are two noteworthy points in this report by Lewis Simons—which was accepted

with one irrelevant qualification as “excellent” by the State Department’s leading Cambodia watcher. First, the number of deaths is estimated by “most Westerners” who are close observers as in the several hundred thousand range, most of them from disease and malnutrition. Second, most Cambodia watchers doubt that the “summary justice” is centrally organized, believing rather that it is the responsibility of local commanders. Again we are left with some doubts, to put it conservatively, as regards the standard media picture: a centrally-controlled genocidal policy of mass execution.

Note also that the numbers killed were estimated by the leading government expert as in the “thousands or hundreds of thousands.” (Twining, who adds that “very honestly, I think we can’t accurately estimate a figure.”) His superior, Richard Holbrooke, offered an estimate of “tens if not hundreds of thousands” for “deaths” from all causes.⁷⁴ He offered his “guess” that “for every person executed several people have died of disease, malnutrition, or other factors ...” (which he claims were “avoidable,” though he does not indicate how).⁷⁵ Twining’s colleague Timothy Carney—the second of the State Department’s leading Cambodia watchers—estimated the number of deaths from “brutal, rapid change” (not “mass genocide”) as in the hundreds of thousands.⁷⁶ What about deaths from causes other than killing? A major source of death, Simons reports:

appears to be failure of the 1976 rice crop. The government averted famine in mid-1975 by evacuating Phnom Penh and other cities and forcing almost every able-bodied person to work the land. But food production fell badly last year.

If this “excellent” analysis is correct, as Twining indicates, the evacuation of Phnom Penh, widely denounced at the time and since for its undoubted brutality, may actually have saved many lives.⁷⁷ It is striking that the crucial facts rarely appear in the chorus of condemnations. At the time of the evacuation, AFP reported from Bangkok that:

Recent aerial photographs by American reconnaissance planes are said to have shown that only 12 percent of the rice paddies have been planted. The monsoon, which marks the beginning of the planting season, came a month early this year. There was also the problem of the acute shortage of rice in the capital when the Communists took over on April 17. According to Long Boret, the old Government’s last premier, Phnom Penh had only eight days’ worth of rice on hand on the eve of the surrender.⁷⁸

In a *New York Times* Op-Ed, William Goodfellow, who left Cambodia with the final U.S. evacuation in April, 1975 wrote that “A.I.D. officials reported that stockpiles of rice in Phnom Penh could last for six days.” Commenting on the “death march” from Phnom Penh, he writes that “in fact, it was a journey away from certain death by starvation... [which]...was already a reality in the urban centers.”⁷⁹ The director of the U.S. aid program “estimated that in Phnom Penh alone 1.2 million people were in ‘desperate need’ of United States food, although at the time only 640,000 people were actually receiving

some form of United States food support” and “starvation was widely reported.”⁸⁰ Goodfellow also correctly assigns the responsibility for the impending famine: it was caused primarily by the U.S. bombing campaign which “shattered” the agrarian economy—an unquestionable fact that has since been quietly forgotten.

The situation in Phnom Penh resulting from the U.S. war is graphically described in a carefully-documented study by Hildebrand and Porter that has been almost totally ignored by the press.⁸¹ By early 1974 the World Health Organization estimated that half the children of Phnom Penh, which was swollen to almost 5 times its normal size by the U.S. bombardment and the ravages of the war directly caused by U.S. intervention, were suffering from malnutrition. A Congressional study mission reported “severe nutritional damage.” Studies in late 1974 and early 1975 revealed “a disastrous decline in nutritional status,” indicating “a caloric intake during a year or longer of less than 60 percent of the minimum required to maintain body weight.” A Department of State study of February 1975 reported that these statistics “confirmed the universal medical impression given us by those involved in Cambodia health and nutrition that children are starving to death.” Starvation also lowered resistance to infection and disease. There were reports that cholera was spreading rapidly in Phnom Penh. The medical director for Catholic Relief Services declared in March, 1975, that “hundreds are dying of malnutrition every day.” Red Cross and other observers reported thousands of small children dying from hunger and disease. Note that all of this refers to the period before the Khmer Rouge victory.

As Hildebrand and Porter remark, “those children who did not die from starvation will suffer permanent damage to their bodies and minds due to the severe malnutrition.” They quote Dr. Penelope Key of the World Vision Organization, working in Phnom Penh:

This generation is going to be a lost generation of children. Malnutrition is going to affect their numbers and their mental capacities. So, as well as knocking off a generation of young men, the war is knocking off a generation of children.

Porter added relevant information in his Congressional testimony:

It must be noted that the same official sources who were claiming [a postwar death toll of 800,000-1.4 million] had been saying in June 1975 that a million people were certain to die of starvation in the next year because there were simply no food stocks available in Cambodia to provide for them.⁸²

Porter drew the conclusion that the postwar death tolls were exaggerated by officials who “had an obvious vested interest [in] not admitting their failure to understand the capacity of the new regime to feed its people.” Alternatively, suppose that their postwar estimates are correct. Since the situation at the war’s end is squarely the responsibility of the United States, so are the million or so deaths that were predicted as a direct result of

that situation.^{[83](#)}

The horrendous situation in Phnom Penh (as elsewhere in Cambodia) as the war drew to an end was a direct and immediate consequence of the U.S. assault—prior to the U.S. actions that drew Cambodia into the Indochina war, the situation was far from ideal, contrary to colonialist myths about happy peasants, but it was nothing like the accounts just reviewed by Congressional study missions and health and relief workers. The same is true of the vast destruction of agricultural lands and draught animals, peasant villages and communications, not to speak of the legacy of hatred and revenge. The United States bears primary responsibility for these consequences of its intervention. All of this is forgotten when sole responsibility is assigned to the Khmer Rouge for deaths from malnutrition and disease. It is as if some Nazi apologist were to condemn the allies for postwar deaths from starvation and disease in DP camps, though the analogy is unfair to the Nazis, since the allies at least had the resources to try to deal with the Nazi legacy.

Consider again what lies behind the call for military intervention in Cambodia. The leading State Department specialist estimated killings in the “thousands or hundreds of thousands,” and attributed a still larger number of deaths to disease and malnutrition—in significant and perhaps overwhelming measure, a consequence of U.S. terror. Furthermore, a news report that the State Department specialist regards as “excellent” notes that “it is generally accepted” by Cambodia watchers that “summary justice” is not centrally-directed. Another government expert insists that it would be necessary to conquer every village to subdue the Khmer Rouge. But when a leading senatorial dove calls for military intervention, the *Wall Street Journal*, which backed the U.S. aggression and massacre through the worst atrocities, has the gall to make the following editorial comment:

Now, having finished the task of destroying [the U.S. presence in Indochina, American liberals] are shocked and dismayed by the news of the grim and brutal world that resulted. One of the few good things to come out of the sordid end of our Indochina campaign was a period of relative silence from the people who took us through all its painful contortions. They should have the grace to maintain their quiet for at least a while longer.^{[84](#)}

About postwar Cambodia, they have only this to say: the “present Communist rulers have starved, worked, shot, beaten and hacked to death upwards of a million of the country’s citizens.” Not a word about the U.S. role or continuing responsibility for death and suffering, let alone an effort to evaluate the evidence or to face the “difficult questions” that arise.

It would take a volume to record the material of this sort that dominates the U.S.,

indeed the Western press. Before turning to the nature of the evidence adduced concerning the scale and character of postwar atrocities in Cambodia, we will cite only one more example selected out of the mass of comparable instances, along with an example of journalistic integrity that is another of the rare exceptions.

On July 31, 1978, *Time* magazine published a “Time Essay” entitled: “Cambodia: An Experiment in Genocide,” by David Aikman. The essay is short on documentation but not sparing in its outrage. The sole documentation offered is the “interview” with Khieu Samphan already cited—an example that was specifically pointed out in advance to a *Time* reporter preparing background for this article as a probable fabrication—and a statement on Radio Phnom Penh that “more than 2,000 years of Cambodian history have virtually ended,” which Aikman presents as a “boast of this atrocity,” though other interpretations easily come to mind.

According to *Time*, “the lowest estimate of the bloodbath to date—by execution, starvation, and disease—is in the hundreds of thousands. The highest exceeds 1 million, and that in a country that once numbered no more than 7 million.” Figures apart, what is striking about this claim is that nowhere in the article is there any reference to any U.S. role or responsibility, no indication that deaths from starvation and disease may be something other than a “bloodbath” by the Khmer Rouge.

A major theme of the *Time* essay is that “somehow the enormity of the Cambodian tragedy—even leaving aside the grim question of how many or how few actually died in Angka Loeu’s experiment in genocide—has failed to evoke an appropriate response of outrage in the West,” and even worse, “some political theorists have defended it, as George Bernard Shaw and other Western intellectuals defended the brutal social engineering in the Soviet Union during the 1930s”; “there are intellectuals in the West so committed to the twin Molochs of our day—‘liberation’ and ‘revolution’—that they can actually defend what has happened in Cambodia.” In fact, the Western press since 1975 has poured forth reams of denunciations of Cambodia in the most strident tones, repeating the most extreme denunciations often on flimsy evidence, in striking contrast to its behavior in the case of massacres elsewhere, as in Timor; the U.S. press is particularly notable for a marked double standard in this regard, though it is hardly alone. And there is good reason why Aikman fails to mention the names of those “political theorists” who have defended “the Cambodian tragedy”—as this would require differentiating those who have exposed media distortions and tried to discover the facts, instead of joining the bandwagon of uncritical abuse, from those who say that no serious atrocities have

occurred (a small or non-existent set that *Time* has searched for, apparently without success).⁸⁵ Specificity also might require publicizing the views of critics of the current propaganda barrage, which would make it difficult to avoid discussion of the crucial U.S. role in postwar suffering and deaths in Cambodia or of the actual nature of what *Time* regards as “evidence.” For *Time* ideologists, a defender of the “Cambodian tragedy” is one who fails to place all the blame for postwar suffering on the Khmer Rouge and who otherwise contests the patriotic truths handed down by the *Reader’s Digest* and similar sources.

For the ideologists of *Time*, the Cambodian tragedy is the “logical conclusion” of “bloodbath sociology” associated with socialism and Marxism. The “moral relativism” of the West makes it difficult to see that the Cambodian experience “is the deadly logical consequence of an atheistic, man-centered system of values, enforced by fallible human beings with total power, who believe, with Marx, that morality is whatever the powerful define it to be and, with Mao, that power grows from gun barrels.” Unlike the more “humane Marxist societies in Europe today,” the Cambodians do not “permit the dilution of their doctrine by what Solzhenitsyn has called ‘the great reserves of mercy and sacrifice’ from a Christian tradition.” As for the significance of the Christian tradition for the Third World—not to speak of the European experience—*Time* has no more to say than it does about the great reserves of mercy and sacrifice shown by the U.S. leaders who sent their angels of mercy to flatten the villages of Indochina while the editors of *Time* lauded this noble enterprise.⁸⁶ And it is fitting indeed that they should cite Solzhenitsyn, the profound thinker who denounced the West for failing to carry this enterprise to a successful conclusion, in the spirit of Christian humanism.

To show in contrast that honest journalism remains possible, consider a report by Richard Dudman just after the fall of Phnom Penh.⁸⁷ Dudman was captured in Cambodia while serving as a U.S. war correspondent in Southeast Asia, and wrote an important book on his experiences with the Khmer Rouge.⁸⁸ Dudman writes that “the constant indiscriminate bombing, an estimated 450,000 dead and wounded civilians to say nothing of military casualties, and the estimated 4,000,000 refugees were almost inevitable results of the short U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the subsequent proxy war that ended in defeat for the United States as well as for its client regime in Phnom Penh.” Relying in part on his personal experience in captivity, he adds that “the U.S. invasion spread the Communist-led guerrillas through most of Cambodia” and drove the Vietnamese Communists and the Cambodian population “into an alliance as comrades in arms against

a common enemy—American tanks and bombs,” which were a “catalyst”: “we [the Khmer Rouge prisoners] could see Cambodian peasants turning to a friend in need in the form of the military forces of the Vietnamese Communists.”

To ignore these basic facts in reporting postwar Cambodia is as disgraceful as to attribute the U.S. legacy of starvation, disease, and bitter hatreds simply to atheistic Communism carried to its “logical conclusion.”

Let us now turn to an evaluation of the evidence that is used by the media as support for their denunciations. Simons examined this question in an analysis after his return from several years as *Post* correspondent in Bangkok.⁸⁹ Accompanying the article is a photograph showing workers under military guard with the following caption: “Photo from smuggled film purports to show forced labor in Cambodian countryside.” Simons comments that “a number of journals, including the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *Time* and *Paris Match*, have published several photographs purporting to show atrocities in Cambodia.” But he continues:

Several U.S. and other experts believe that these pictures were posed in Thailand. “They’re fakes,” commented a State Department officer who has followed Cambodian affairs closely since before the end of the war.

As we shall see there is more to the story: the photographs continued to be published long after they were exposed as frauds, and corrections were refused by the journals that published them.

Simons next turns to the interview in which Khieu Samphan is alleged to have conceded that the Khmer Rouge are responsible for a million deaths, which he writes, was “subsequently referred to in the *New York Times Magazine*.” He adds that the very occurrence of that interview is denied by François Ponchaud. Again, as we shall see, there is more to the story.

Simons then makes the following interesting observation:

Oddly, those few Western governments which have diplomatic relations with Cambodia generally refuse to accept the genocide allegation. “We’d need a lot more evidence before we’d be ready to believe such a serious charge,” said an ambassador from a Scandinavian country. Representatives of his government have visited Phnom Penh several times since the war ended.

This lead too deserves to be explored. It is indeed “odd” that Western visitors to Phnom Penh refused to join the chorus. At the very least, a rational person might well heed Simons’ observation that “reports about Cambodia should be treated with skepticism.”

Simons offers other reasons for skepticism. Noting that “just one member of the U.S. embassy staff in Thailand [presumably, Twining] is assigned to monitoring Cambodian

affairs,” Simons comments:

Most information gathered by this official and by journalists in Southeast Asia comes from interviewing Cambodian refugees who have fled to Thailand. Almost all of these refugees come from the northwestern part of Cambodia, an area which was never well controlled by the Communists and where reprisals by long-embittered guerrillas were fierce in the months immediately following the Communist victory. From this bare-bones intelligence gathering, nationwide projections have been drawn. It is these projections that have led to the conclusion that Cambodian leaders are genocidal monsters and that the torment of this once-gentle land has no parallel in modern history.

Again, what Simons reports has been emphasized by specialists to whom we return.⁹⁰ The State Department’s Cambodia watcher, Charles Twining, comments that “our information is just inadequate. Most of it is from northwestern Cambodia and we have virtually nothing from northeastern Cambodia, so it is awfully hard to put together a significant figure and I think none of us want to give an estimate [of deaths].”⁹¹

Simons cites Gareth Porter’s comment that the forced evacuation of urban centers “was well-advised, though ‘heavy-handed.’”⁹² He quotes Porter as follows:

The fact is that the evacuation and the regime’s concentration on rice production have averted mass starvation. If you look at the three Indochinese countries today, you’ll find that Cambodia undoubtedly is in the best food position.

Simons continues: “This claim is more or less supported by State Department officials,” who say “people are probably eating better” and note reports of rice exports. We will return to reports by visitors that confirm these conclusions, contrary to the standard picture presented by the media of mass starvation or even systematic policies of starvation undertaken by the leadership, as Lacouture and others contend. It is particularly worthy of note that visitors in late 1978 found food supplies to be more than adequate. The severe floods of the preceding months had a devastating effect on agricultural production throughout the region, causing a very serious shortage of food in neighboring countries. Some reports indicate that Cambodia may have been the hardest hit of all the countries of the region,⁹³ but it seems that the extensive development of dikes and dams in the postwar period, which has consistently impressed visitors, sufficed, despite some damage, to overcome the worst effects and to afford the population an ample supply of food, even including a surplus for export, according to the regime; an achievement that U.S. specialists describe as “spectacular” if true.⁹⁴

Simons takes note of the U.S. attack on Cambodia and gives an accurate account of doubts raised by critics of the Western propaganda system, whom he misleadingly describes as “supporters of the Cambodian regime” (or “defenders,” or “friends,” of the regime); concern for factual accuracy carries no such implication. He asks why the most extreme conclusions about Cambodia have been “widely accepted” despite their often

flimsy basis, and suggests two reasons: “First, while figures may be subject to doubt, what’s the difference between whether tens of thousands or a million people have been killed?”⁹⁵ Second, the refusal of the government to permit outside observers itself suggests that they are attempting “to hide some horrible secret.” Simons argues that these points “have acceptable moral bases” but “sidestep key issues.” Reprisals have been common after other wars, and while the Cambodian government’s policy towards foreigners “may be judged extreme xenophobia, it does not prove that genocide is being carried out behind the bamboo curtain.” We are more skeptical about the moral basis for these points, for reasons already discussed. We wonder, for example, whether the reaction would be the same if some critic of the United States were to charge that U.S. troops had killed 40,000 civilians at My Lai, then responding to a correction by asking what’s the difference—just a factor of a hundred. Recall further that it is the more sensational claims that have been endlessly repeated by the media and have led to a call for military intervention in Cambodia. As for Cambodian “xenophobia,” it is worth considering just what the experience of Cambodian peasants has been with the West, not only under French colonialism but also in the few years of the war.⁹⁶ Does the term “xenophobia” accurately convey their reaction?

This report, by one of the few serious U.S. correspondents who have recently worked in Southeast Asia, stands alone in the U.S. mass media, to our knowledge, in its fairness and accuracy in presenting the views of critics of the media barrage and its concern for the quality of available evidence, though Simons’s skepticism, like that of many other close observers, has been drowned in the deluge.

Let us now consider in detail the several points that Simons raised. To begin with, consider the photograph that appeared along with Simons’s article. This is one of several that have, as he notes, been widely circulated in the press as sure proof of Communist barbarism.

On April 8, 1977, the *Washington Post* devoted half a page to “photographs believed to be the first of actual forced labor conditions in the countryside of Cambodia [to] have reached the West.” The pictures show armed soldiers guarding people pulling plows, others working fields, and one bound man (“It is not known if this man was killed,” the caption reads). Quite a sensational testimonial to Communist atrocities. But there is a slight problem. The *Post* account of how they were smuggled out by a relative of the photographer who died in the escape attempt is entirely fanciful. Furthermore, the photos had appeared a year earlier in France, Germany, and Australia, as well as in the *Bangkok*

Post (19 April 1976), where they appeared under the caption “True or False?” This strongly anti-Communist journal turned down an attempt by a Thai trader to sell them the photos “because the origin and authenticity of the photos were in doubt.” The photos appeared in a Thai-language newspaper two days before the April 4th election. The *Bangkok Post* then published them, explaining that “Khmer watchers were dubious about the clothes and manner of the people depicted, and quoting “other observers” who “pointed to the possibility that the series of pictures could have been taken in Thailand with the prime objective of destroying the image of the Socialist parties” before the election. This speculation seems eminently reasonable. Westerners in Southeast Asia have reported that the Thai press, including the *Bangkok Post*, was exploiting “horror stories” from Cambodia to undermine the Socialist parties in Thailand.⁹⁷

The facts were reported in the *U.S./Indochina Report* of the Washington-based Indochina Resource Center in July, 1976, along with the additional information that a Thai intelligence officer later admitted that the photos were indeed posed inside Thailand: “‘Only the photographer and I were supposed to know,’ he confided to a Thai journalist.” The full details were again given in the *International Bulletin* (circulation 6,000).⁹⁸ A letter of April 20 to the *Washington Post* correcting its story was not printed, though “the *Post* published a short item acknowledging the doubts, but pointing out that the pictures had been published elsewhere.”⁹⁹ The “freedom of the press” assures that readers of the *International Bulletin* could learn the true facts of the matter concealed by the mass media.

We reviewed the story thus far shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁰ But it continued to evolve. The major newsweeklies did not want to miss the opportunity to offer their readers visual evidence of Khmer Rouge tyranny, and could not be deterred merely because the evidence was faked—repeated exposure has rarely dimmed the lustre of other familiar propaganda tales, such as the North Vietnamese land reform bloodbath of the 1950s, discussed in Volume I. On November 21, 1977, *Time* magazine ran the photo of the bound man. While the *Washington Post* had withheld judgment on whether the victim was killed in the staged photo, doubts had now been eliminated and *Time* assured the reader that he was executed. Several letters were sent to *Time* reporting the facts just reviewed and also noting that their fakery went beyond that of the *Washington Post*. Those who had wasted their efforts alerting *Time* to the facts were rewarded by the following response:

TIME printed that photograph of a Khmer Rouge execution (if indeed that is what it is) in good faith. We were assured of its authenticity by the Sygma agency who provided us with it: they say they obtained it from a Cambodian refugee now living in Paris, whose name did not appear in the credit for fear of endangering his family in Cambodia. We note that the authenticity of the photograph has been questioned, but it seems to us that there is no way of proving it one way or the other. However, we do thank you for alerting us to the

problem.

Not to be outdone, *Newsweek* leaped into the fray in its issue of January 23, 1978. The executioner and his victim appear on the cover of the international edition, and two other faked photos appear within, one with the caption “The executioners: For the condemned, a swift, primitive and brutal death,” and the other, “Life under the Khmer Rouge: Armed guards supervise forced labor in the fields.”

In a February 16, 1978, story filed by the Pacific News Service, Douglas Foster added some further details. He cites a State Department intelligence source who labels the photos a fake and said in an interview that he was “appalled” and “shocked” to see the photographs in the press. Foster also interviewed the director of the Sygma agency which had been distributing these intelligence fabrications to eager customers. She claims to have alerted *Time* to the possibility that the photos were propaganda plants, but held that the photographs were useful anyway, regardless of their authenticity, on the following grounds: “...As the people at *Newsweek* told me, if the photograph hasn’t been absolutely proved false, (the questions) don’t matter. Besides that, the Khmer Rouge do these things, like blowing people’s heads off. So the photos are like drawings ...”

Foster notes that the photos have appeared widely in the U.S. and Western Europe (also in Australia), and comments: “No Western publisher who has used the photos has yet alerted readers that the pictures may well be bogus.”^{[101](#)}

The reaction of the *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, the Sygma agency, and others who have been engaged in this little exercise of atrocity fabrication,^{[102](#)} recalls some of George Orwell’s remarks on the Stalinist press:

When one considers the elaborate forgeries that have been committed in order to show that Trotsky did not play a valuable part in the Russian civil war, it is difficult to feel that the people responsible are merely lying. More probably, they feel that their own version was what happened in the sight of God, and that one is justified in rearranging the records accordingly.^{[103](#)}

Putting aside the manifest dishonesty, suppose that the photographs had been authentic. We might then ask why people should be pulling plows in Cambodia, as one of the faked photographs claims to show. The reason is clear, though unmentioned in this propaganda exercise. The savage U.S. assault on Cambodia did not spare the animal population. The Cambodian government reports that the attack on rural Cambodia led to the destruction of 50-60% of livestock in some areas, 30-40% in others.^{[104](#)} One can learn from the reports of refugees that “they had to pull the plows themselves because there were no oxen.”^{[105](#)} Some died from the exhausting work of pulling plows. Who is responsible for these deaths? The U.S. press did not have to resort to propaganda plants to depict the facts. A

hundred-word item buried in the *New York Times* cites an official U.N. report that teams of “human buffaloes” pull plows in Laos in areas where the buffalo herds, along with everything else, were decimated (by the U.S. bombing, although this goes unmentioned in the *Times* in accordance with postwar taboo).¹⁰⁶ Much the same is true in Vietnam, as already noted. Quite possibly the U.N. or the Laotian Government could supply photographic evidence, but this would not satisfy the needs of current propaganda.

Let us now turn to the second example that Simons cites, namely, the interview in which Cambodian premier Khieu Samphan is alleged to have conceded a million deaths at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. This is the most widely-circulated “crucial evidence” offered of the barbarity of the regime—we have already given several examples—and is regularly cited by academic specialists, intelligence analysts, and Cambodia watchers. Frank Snepp, one of the top CIA analysts for Indochina, writes the following, with regard to the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge—which typically, he claims have been ignored in the West:

Khieu Samphan himself has provided perhaps the most reliable estimate of the casualties. During a conference of nonaligned countries in Colombo in August 1976 he admitted to an Italian journalist that the population of Cambodia had dropped by a million since the end of the war. When asked what had happened to all these people, he replied, “It’s incredible how concerned you westerners are about war criminals.”¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Timothy Carney, a State Department specialist on Cambodia,¹⁰⁸ testified before Congress, without qualifications, that “in a 1976 interview with an Italian magazine, Khieu Samphan said that there were 5 million people in Cambodia.”¹⁰⁹ Given roughly 1 million killed or wounded during the war (a “close” estimate, according to Carney), and a prewar population on the order of 7-8 million, we have over a million postwar deaths (i.e., victims of the Khmer Rouge, with a little further sleight-of-hand). As Carney notes, the alleged estimate of 5 million by Khieu Samphan contradicts the estimate by the Cambodian government that the population is 7.7 million, but he offers no explanation for the discrepancy.

Simons reports that the alleged interview was “supposedly given by head of state Khieu Samphan to an obscure Italian Catholic journal, *Famiglia Cristiana*, in September, 1976, and subsequently referred to in the *New York Times Magazine*,” though its authenticity is denied by Ponchaud, “a French Catholic priest who is a bitter opponent of the Cambodian Communists,” who wrote in August, 1977 that he knows “for certain” that the interview never took place. These statements are correct, but are only part of the story. To add some further detail, in the *New York Times Magazine*,¹¹⁰ Robert Moss (extreme right-wing editor of a dubious offshoot of Britain’s *Economist* called “Foreign Report,” which

specializes in sensational rumors from the world's intelligence agencies) asserts that "Cambodia's pursuit of total revolution has resulted, by the official admission of its Head of State, Khieu Samphan, in the slaughter of a million people." Moss offered no source for this "official admission." We speculated that his source was probably the *Reader's Digest*, that noteworthy journal of cool and dispassionate political analysis, and Moss informed us in a personal letter that that suspicion was correct. Turning back to Moss's source, we read in the Barron-Paul book, expanding their *Reader's Digest* article:

Khieu Samphan, as Cambodian chief of state, attended the Colombo Conference of nonaligned nations in August 1976 and while there was interviewed by the Italian weekly magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*. "Those traitors that remained have been executed," the magazine quoted him as saying. It further quoted him: "In five years of warfare, more than one million Cambodians died. The current population of Cambodia is five million. Before the war, the population numbered seven million."¹¹¹

Barron and Paul then write that in response to a query as to the fate of the missing one million people, Khieu Samphan replied: "It is incredible how concerned you Westerners are about war criminals." They conclude that "if quoted accurately, Khieu Samphan indicated that between April 17, 1975, and the time of the interview in August 1976 roughly a million Cambodians died."

Note that even if Khieu Samphan had "indicated" that a million Cambodians had died, that is not quite the same as an "official admission...[of]...the slaughter of a million people" as a "result" of Khmer Rouge policy, as in Moss's rendition, which he saw no need to correct when the discrepancy was pointed out to him.

Ponchaud's denial of the authenticity of the interview was in a letter of August, 1977.¹¹² The denial is particularly pertinent because Ponchaud is cited as the sole independent (nongovernmental) expert source in Barron and Paul's book. Furthermore, both Barron and Paul refer to their close association with Ponchaud.¹¹³

In the light of these facts, we have repeatedly asked Ponchaud in personal letters to present publicly the details of this matter, in view of his expressed devotion to the "search for truth about the events in Cambodia"¹¹⁴ and the fact that the alleged interview is not only widely circulated and used as a basis for conclusions about Cambodian atrocities, but had even been offered as grounds for military intervention.¹¹⁵ In response to these requests, Ponchaud sent a letter to John Barron stating what he knew of the facts. Unfortunately, he has refused permission to quote from this five-page French letter unless it is quoted in its entirety, a requirement that in effect keeps it from the public domain. We are therefore unable to offer his information about the alleged "interview" or other relevant matters.

The matter is taken up by William Shawcross in a review of Barron-Paul.^{[116](#)} He points out that journalists who were present at Colombo, the site of the alleged interview with Paola Brianti, “say that none of them was ever able to get anywhere near Khieu Samphan...Two reporters have asserted flatly that she could not have gotten the interview and that it is a fake,” though “she sticks by her story.”

Note that in their book Barron and Paul qualify their comment by saying “if quoted correctly ...” The qualification is certainly in order, if only because they misquote the *Famiglia Cristiana* interview (it was the interviewer, not Khieu Samphan, who is alleged to have offered the 7 million figure). Furthermore, as they and others fail to note, Khieu Samphan explicitly denied the massacre reports in the “interview.” There is every reason to be skeptical as to whether there was such an interview, or if there was, whether the “quotes” are anywhere near accurate.

It is doubtful that the journalists and others who have referred to Khieu Samphan’s “admission” of a million deaths (or a million “slaughtered”) have ever seen the original article in *Famiglia Cristiana*, which is hardly a well-known source on international affairs. In fact, not a single copy of this journal is to be found in a library in the United States. The journal is a weekly published by the Pauline sisters and is primarily found in churches. It has apparently not occurred to the journalists, scholars, Cambodia specialists, intelligence analysts and congressmen who have quoted or misquoted this “interview” to wonder why Khieu Samphan, at a time when the Cambodian government was not making extraordinary efforts to reach out to the Western World, should have chosen Paola Brianti and *Famiglia Cristiana* as the medium for approaching Western public opinion. Nor has it occurred to them to be skeptical about a chain of transmission that proceeds from *Famiglia Cristiana* to the *Reader’s Digest* and then to the international community, or to wonder why Khieu Samphan should have offered a figure of 5 million Cambodians when his government was estimating the population at about 7.7 million.^{[117](#)}

The *Famiglia Cristiana* “interview” has not only been picked up by the U.S. press, congressmen, and intelligence analysts, but also by the foreign press and the scholarly literature.^{[118](#)} For example, the *Economist* gives the following version:

When the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan, was confronted by these stark statistics last summer—a 7m population in 1970, an estimated 1m killed during the war, a presumed 5m people left in 1976—he replied blandly, “It’s incredible how concerned you westerners are about war criminals.” What is incredible is how little foreign outrage these figures provoke.^{[119](#)}

What is perhaps incredible is that the *Economist* should place such reliance on this “interview.”

No less incredible is the review of the Barron-Paul book in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* by Donald Wise,^{[120](#)} which begins as follows:

Scene: The Non-Aligned Nations Conference, Colombo, August 1976.

Then comes the Barron-Paul mistranslation of the probably fabricated *Famiglia Cristiana* interview, plus the inevitable comment that the world “is *not concerned about the genocide in Cambodia*” (*his emphasis*).

Turning to the scholarly literature, Kenneth M. Quinn writes that the figure of 7.7 million offered by the Cambodian government “was revised downward to five million by Khieu Samphan in an interview he gave to the Italian magazine *Famiglia Christiana* [sic].”^{[121](#)} Again, no qualifications and no question about the source. The Quinn account is perhaps independent of Barron-Paul, given the dates and the fact that it does not offer the standard mistranslation by Barron-Paul, contenting itself with misspelling and misrepresentation of the contents. Quinn, who is described in *Asian Survey* as a State Department representative on the National Security Council Staff, is one of the experts who Barron and Paul cite as having made data available to them and having “guided us to other sources,”^{[122](#)} including, perhaps, this one.

A year later, Professor Karl D. Jackson surveyed the situation in Cambodia once again for *Asian Survey*.^{[123](#)} Attempting to reconcile apparently conflicting claims about the grain problem, he suggests as one possibility that although food production has still not reached prewar levels, it may suffice “to feed a substantially reduced population, i.e., the five million people cited by Khieu Samphan in 1976, rather than the eight million cited by various officials including Pol Pot.” His reference for Khieu Samphan’s “estimate” is Donald Wise’s review in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* which begins by citing the Barron-Paul mistranslation of the alleged *Famiglia Cristiana* interview, which, to compound the absurdity, had already been cited in *Asian Survey* a year earlier by a State Department analyst who may well have been the source for Barron-Paul. No doubt the next reference to Khieu Samphan’s “admission” will appear in an article by Quinn citing Jackson.

A few months after Khieu Samphan’s now famous “admission” that his regime was responsible for the deaths of about one-sixth of the population of Cambodia, Indonesian Prime Minister Adam Malik admitted that 50-80,000 people, close to the same percentage of the population, had been killed in East Timor in the course of what the Indonesian propaganda ministry and the *New York Times* call the “civil war”—that is, the U.S.-backed Indonesian invasion and massacre—though one could not have discovered this fact from

the U.S. media.¹²⁴ While Khieu Samphan's "admission" was concocted by the media and scholarship on the basis of a fanciful interpretation of remarks that quite possibly were never made, Malik's admission, by contrast, was clear and explicit. A comparison of media reaction to the actual admission by Malik and the concocted "admission" by Khieu Samphan gives some insight into what lies behind the machinations of the Free Press.

These examples, far from exhaustive, reveal how desperate Western commentators have been to find "evidence" that could be used in the international propaganda campaign concerning Cambodia. The credible reports of atrocities—and there were many—did not suffice for these purposes, and it was necessary to seek out the most dubious evidence. It hardly needs emphasis that journals of the quality and renown of *Famiglia Cristiana* (or, for that matter, the *Reader's Digest*) in the enemy camp would be regarded with the utmost skepticism, if not dismissed outright, were they to offer comparable "evidence" about Western atrocities.¹²⁵

In this case, the *Famiglia Cristiana* "interview" bears all the earmarks of an intelligence fabrication of the type that the CIA is known to have indulged in repeatedly.¹²⁶

Before turning to the next example cited by Simons, let us consider further the Wise review of Barron-Paul in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, cited above. To conclude the review which began with the Barron-Paul mistranslation of the probably fabricated interview, Wise offers the following quote from a Cambodian official transmitted by Barron and Paul:

...to rebuild a new Cambodia, 1 million men is enough. *Prisoners of war (people expelled from the cities and villages controlled by the Government on April 17) are no longer needed, and local chiefs are free to dispose of them as they please.*

Surely this is a damning indictment of the Khmer Rouge, on a par with Khieu Samphan's "admission." So let us therefore examine it, to determine whether it has any more credibility than the "interview" that has been so widely exploited to prove Communist iniquity, by Wise among others. As we pursue the trail, we enter into a curious comedy of errors.

Wise's quote is from Barron-Paul:

Francois Ponchaud, the noted French authority on Cambodia, reports that on January 26 an *Angka* official in the Mongkol Borei district declared: "To build a democratic Cambodia by renewing everything on a new basis; to do away with every reminder of colonial and imperialist culture, whether visible or tangible or in a person's mind; to rebuild our new Cambodia, one million men is enough. *Prisoners of war [people expelled from the cities and villages controlled by the government on April 17] are no longer needed, and local chiefs are free to dispose of them as they please.*"¹²⁷

Apart from an insignificant error, Wise reproduces Barron-Paul correctly. Barron-Paul give no source, but the source must be an article by Ponchaud in *Le Monde*¹²⁸ where he asserts that a Khmer Rouge military chief made this statement in a directive to local authorities of the district on January 26, 1976. The accuracy of the translation has been challenged, but we will ignore this matter, since far more serious doubts arise.¹²⁹

Before turning to these, let us look into the identification of “prisoners of war.” Barron-Paul quote the interpolated remark accurately from Ponchaud. In an article in *Le Monde* on the preceding day Ponchaud makes the same point. He says that refugees distinguish two categories of people: “the ‘old people’ from the regions liberated before 1975, and the ‘new people’ liberated on April 17, 1975. These ‘new people’ are always considered as ‘prisoners of war’ and have no rights.” The allegation appears in a somewhat different form in Ponchaud’s subsequent book. Here he writes that Khmer Rouge soldiers had “more than enough to eat and refused themselves nothing; they had rice, meat, and fish in plenty,” but they were withholding food from workers who “were literally dying of hunger”¹³⁰: “Their reasoning was simple enough: ‘You are prisoners of war. We went hungry for five years. Now it’s your turn!’”¹³¹ No source is given for the latter quote, and no evidence is cited suggesting its general applicability. As we shall see, Ponchaud uses the device of quotation with considerable abandon, so that skepticism is in order about this particular case.

Turning now to the quote given by Wise from Barron-Paul, who cite Ponchaud, note that they say Ponchaud attributes it to “an *Angka* official” on January 26, 1976. In fact, he attributes it to a Khmer Rouge military chief who issued a directive to local authorities on January 26. In his subsequent book, which one would expect to be more careful and considered than a newspaper article, Ponchaud does not give the quote at all. The sentiment surfaces only in the following quote: “Il suffit de 1 ou 2 millions de jeunes pour faire le Kampuchéa nouveau,”¹³²—literally: “One or two million young people are enough to build the new Cambodia.” Not only have the numbers changed—from one million men to 1-2 million young people—but so has the source. The quote is now attributed not to a Khmer Rouge military commander on January 26, 1976, but is rather given (still in quotes) as “the formidable boast” of the Khmer Rouge. The full context is this: “The Khmers Rouges are coldly realizing their formidable boast: ‘...’” (“Les Khmers Rouges réalisent froidement leur redoutable boutade: ‘...’”). This statement closes the chapter entitled “The Calvary of a People.”

Ponchaud’s statement in the book plainly implies that the Khmer Rouge are in the

process of eliminating all but one or two million young people—that is, a total of some 5-7 million people, including all who are not young, out of a population that he estimates at 8 million in 1970. A few lines earlier Ponchaud gives estimates of war deaths (600-800,000) and “peace deaths” (note: not killings but deaths) ranging from 800,000 to 1,400,000, the higher estimates allegedly from U.S. sources. The difference between approximately *a million deaths and the elimination in process of some 5-7 million people a few lines later would seem significant. It is typical of the way that Ponchaud and others use numbers and their care with the distinction between killing and dying (e.g., from disease and malnutrition caused by the war); recall the prediction from U.S. government sources that the numbers who would die from such causes would be on the order of one million.*¹³³

Elsewhere, Ponchaud gives the alleged quote as follows. After stating that the number of postwar dead “certainly exceeds a million,” he writes: “In the view of the revolutionaries, such a slaughter is no catastrophe: ‘one or two million resolute young people are enough to reconstruct Cambodia,’ is a boast [boutade] frequently used by cadres during meetings.”¹³⁴ Here again the implication is that the revolutionaries would not be overly concerned with the massacre of many millions of people, the overwhelming mass of the population. In another publication from the same period, Ponchaud gives still another version of what appears to be the same “quote.” He writes: “A Khmer Rouge stated: ‘If there should remain in Cambodia only 20,000 young people, we will build the new Cambodia with these 20,000.’”¹³⁵ The numbers have changed once again, this time substantially, and there is no specific source. In this case, Ponchaud does not imply that the revolutionaries are in the process of eliminating all but 20,000 young people.

We now have a number of versions of the alleged quote, which Ponchaud evidently regarded as of some significance, given its prominence in his writings in 1976-1977, and the conclusions he drew from it. In only one of these sources (*Le Monde*) is the quote specifically attributed: to a Khmer Rouge military commander issuing a specific directive on a specific date, who says that “one million” are enough—the rest can be “disposed of” (the Barron-Paul translation, which Paul claims was approved by Ponchaud). Ponchaud gives the entire “quote” from this commander in italics in a separate paragraph in this *Le Monde* article, emphasizing its significance. The context, as well as the Barron-Paul rendition, suggest that he must have had some text or other document. In other articles written at the same time and in Ponchaud’s subsequent book, the context and the quote disappear. There is no reference to the alleged directive. Rather, a “formidable boast” of

the Khmer Rouge is given without attribution but in quotes: “one or two million young people” will be enough to build the new society. Nothing is said about disposing of the remainder, but it is implied that the Khmer Rouge are eliminating them.

In his review of the book, Lacouture gives still a different version: “When men who talk of Marxism are able to say, as one quoted by Ponchaud does, that only 1.5 or 2 million young Cambodians, out of 6 million, will be enough to rebuild a pure society, one can no longer speak of barbarism” but only “madness.”¹³⁶

We mentioned the discrepancy between the *Le Monde* account and the book in the review-article cited in note 100, adding that “this is one of the rare examples of a quote that can be checked. The results are not impressive.”

In his letter commenting on this article,¹³⁷ Ponchaud explained that the original *Le Monde* reference was based not on any text but rather on a report by a refugee who said that he had heard this remark from the chief of the Northwest region of Cambodia at a meeting; in our view, it would have been a good idea to state the source accurately in the original article. Ponchaud writes that he subsequently heard similar reports from refugees with numbers ranging from 100,000 to 2 million, and “in a spirit of truth,” gave a more qualified account in his book, without a specific source. Ponchaud interprets the alleged statements:

not as a firm wish to reduce...Cambodia to 1 million people, but as expressing a resolution to purify Cambodia without taking into account people's lives. It is therefore more a “redoutable boutade” [a formidable boast] than an explicit affirmation of intention.

We wonder whether under this interpretation, it is still proper to imply, as Ponchaud clearly did in his book, that the Khmer Rouge are in the process of eliminating 5-7 million people in accordance with this “formidable boast.” We continue to be unimpressed. This seems to us a curious way to use the device of quotation. Recall that this is one of the very few cases where an alleged quote can be checked, because in this instance it was reported in at least two separate sources (we will see that other quotes that are subject to verification fare no better, on inquiry). To our minds, it raises serious questions about the authenticity of the quotations that are offered in what is, we again emphasize, the most serious of the critical work on postwar Cambodia. The reader will observe how this rather vague report of what someone is alleged to have said, subject to a qualified interpretation, has been transmuted into a firm declaration of genocidal policy in its long voyage from refugees, to Ponchaud, to Barron-Paul, Lacouture and Wise.

Apparently Ponchaud has since had still further thoughts about the reference. It is

deleted entirely from the American edition of his book, the one from which we have been quoting.¹³⁸ But the long and dubious chain of transmission has left it as part of “history.”

We mention specifically here the “American translation” because, curiously, the quote remains intact in the simultaneous British translation, where the last paragraph of chapter 4, “The Calvary of a People,” reads as follows:

A large part of the deported population appears to have been sacrificed. Its role in the history of Democratic Kampuchea will thus have been to build up the country’s economic infrastructure with its own flesh and blood.¹³⁹ *Now a country of the pure should arise. ‘One or two million young people are enough to make the new Kampuchea!’ was the blood-chilling boast of the Khmers Rouges, which they are now grimly turning into a reality.*¹⁴⁰

The two sentences that we have italicized are omitted in the American edition. The British translation is, perhaps, a bit free, but both the French original and the British translation do clearly imply that the Khmer Rouge are in the process of cold-bloodedly eliminating something on the order of 5-7 million people.

In the British Penguin edition, a slightly different version of Lacouture’s misstatement of this “quote,” or “boast,” or whatever it may be, attributing it to “men who talk of Marxism” and concluding that it goes beyond barbarism, appears on the book’s cover. In the American translation, it is entirely deleted from the book, along with the claim that some 5-7 million people (including all but the young) are being eliminated to build “a country of the pure.” We leave it to the reader to decide what to make of all of this.¹⁴¹

Some further skepticism about this “quote” or “boast” is aroused by the Congressional testimony of State Department expert Charles Twining:

The Khmer Rouge sometimes on a local level will tell villagers that, “we can afford to lose 1 million or even 2 million people.” You hear this story often enough from enough places to make you think it has been handed down from on high.

We can lose 1 million or 2 million if we must to create the new Cambodia...¹⁴²

The reference is suspiciously familiar. In this case, the 1-2 million are not those who will be left (the others cold-bloodedly eliminated by the Khmer Rouge, according to Ponchaud’s rather fanciful construction which he has withdrawn), but rather those who may be “lost.” And the quote is not attributed; rather Twining surmises that it has been “handed down from on high.” It is a reasonable suspicion that this is a residue of the same alleged “boast.” At this point, one must really belong to the faithful to believe that there is anything at all to the whole story. And our trust in those who transmit it without qualification in various forms correspondingly diminishes.

Yet another source for this garbled report is suggested by a Phnom Penh radio broadcast on military problems in which it is explained how Cambodia can defeat the

Vietnamese even though much outnumbered:

Using these figures, 1 Kampuchean soldier is equal to 30 Vietnamese soldiers...If we have 2 million troops, there should be 60 million Vietnamese. For this reason, 2 million troops should be more than enough to fight the Vietnamese, because Vietnam only has 50 million inhabitants. We do not need 8 million people. We need only 2 million troops to crush the 50 million Vietnamese; and we still would have 6 million people left.¹⁴³

Again the statement is suspiciously familiar. It may well be that if there is any source at all for these various accounts, it is some sort of patriotic slogan, formulated with various rhetorical flourishes.

Wise is clearly much enamoured of this “quote.” In the same issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in which he reviewed Barron-Paul,¹⁴⁴ Wise has an article on Cambodia in which he explains that “the new regime is too harsh for the formerly fun-loving, easy-going Cambodians.”¹⁴⁵ As evidence for the harshness, he writes that “a senior Khmer Rouge official was quoted as saying that Cambodia needs no more than 1 million people to get started on its new course and all prisoners—that is, people from zones unoccupied by the Khmer Rouge at the April 1975 ceasefire—are no longer required and may be disposed of as local commanders think fit.” In a review of the English (British) translation of Ponchaud’s book, he cites it once again, in the following context:

Nobody can suggest a reliable figure for the “peace-dead,” says Ponchaud, “but it certainly exceeds a million.” Yet the Khmers Rouges boasted: “One or two million young people are enough to make the new Kampuchea.”¹⁴⁶

The implication is that the “peace-dead” are victims of the Khmer Rouge who “boast” of this massacre because one or two million people are all that are needed. Notice again how the facts, if any, have been skillfully transmuted in their passage through the Western propaganda system. In the first place, there is a serious question as to how many of the “peace-dead” fall to the Western account, rather than that of the Khmer Rouge. There is the further question whether the victims for whom the West does not bear direct responsibility are the victims of peasant revenge or a coordinated policy of massacre. Finally what of the “boast” of the Khmer Rouge—which stands in dramatic contrast to their persistent denial of massacres and expressed commitment to building up the population to 15-20 million? This “boast” is Wise’s version of Ponchaud’s version of a variously-attributed remark that has dissolved upon inquiry. Note again that it is a central element of his review of both Barron-Paul and Ponchaud, and that he also cited it in a separate article. It apparently never occurred to him to wonder why the “quote” he repeats is given and attributed differently in these two sources, or to inquire further into its authenticity on these grounds. In such ways as these the Western system of indoctrination spins its web of deceit.¹⁴⁷

Recall Lacouture's question whether it is important to decide "exactly which person uttered an inhuman phrase." The example just mentioned was one of the cases under consideration—in other cases to which we return the distortion was still more flagrant. It is also one of the examples that Lacouture did not rectify in his "Corrections," and that he continues to use long after Ponchaud had recognized that it had no basis.¹⁴⁸ Lacouture used the "quote" to show that men who talk of Marxism are going "beyond barbarism." In fact, it turns out that there was no quote but only a remembered "boast" of dubious import, variously presented by Ponchaud and sufficiently questionable to have been eliminated from the American (though not British) edition of his book after inquiry, and suspiciously similar to a remembered slogan of quite different import attributed to many refugees by the State Department's leading expert. The example is perhaps not particularly important in itself, but gains significance in the light of the publicity accorded it and the fact that it is one of the rare cases of a "quote" for which independent verification is even possible.

It is also worth mentioning that these "quotes," which have a curious habit of disappearing on analysis, form the most substantial part of the evidence behind one crucial element in the thesis to which the propaganda machine is committed: that the Khmer Rouge leadership was committed to systematic massacre and starvation of the population it held in its grip, that is, to "autogenocide." It would be of little use to contemporary Western ideology if it were to be shown that peasant revenge, undisciplined troops and similar factors (still worse, the legacy of the U.S. attack) were responsible for deaths and killings in Cambodia. It is crucial to establish in the public consciousness, whatever the facts may be, that a centralized and carefully-planned program lay behind the atrocities. As we have seen, one cannot appeal to the refugee reports for this purpose. Therefore "quotes," "boasts," "slogans," "interviews," and similar documentation are of vital significance, as demonstrations of intent and recognition. It is therefore interesting to see how flimsy is the basis on which such elaborate constructions are founded, again, a useful insight into the mechanism and goals of current Western propaganda.

The examples just discussed, which are among the most widely diffused in the Western media and the springboard for many impassioned accusations, are by no means atypical. Let us turn now to the next observation by Simons, namely, that Western governments that have maintained direct contacts with Cambodia and have sent visiting delegations "generally refuse to accept the genocide allegation." One would think that with the intense concern over the internal affairs of Cambodia, evident from the extensive press coverage and denunciations despite repeated laments to the contrary, and the difficulty of obtaining information from a country virtually closed to the outside world, the reports of Western

visitors would have received considerable notice. Such visitors would have been interviewed in depth, one might suppose, and their writings eagerly perused and circulated. That has not quite been the case, however. Their trips were sometimes reported, though just barely, and there was little effort to follow up beyond the first news conference. And Simons's interesting observation, which should have immediately sparked some doubts among journalists with a modicum of skepticism, occasioned no further inquiry.

By late 1978, the regime was beginning to open its doors more widely to foreign visitors. UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim was invited in October,^{[149](#)} and two U.S. reporters—Richard Dudman and Elizabeth Becker—visited in December, along with the British specialist on Southeast Asia Malcolm Caldwell, who was assassinated on the final day of their visit. Another group of visitors from the United States (including one member, Stephen Heder, a specialist on Cambodia, who had lived in Phnom Penh and is fluent in Khmer) had reached Peking when the Vietnamese invasion closed off access to the country in January 1979, and other invitations had been issued. As we noted in the preface to this volume, some observers regard the improvement in the international image of the regime as perhaps the major factor in the timing of the Vietnamese invasion. With large parts of the country under military occupation, there will be no further opportunity to observe at first-hand the social order that had been constructed or to evaluate the picture presented in the West on the basis of refugee reports, selected and transmitted in the manner we have been discussing. Therefore, it is a matter of some interest to review the material that could have been exploited, the leads that could have been followed up by journalists and others concerned to establish the truth about postwar Cambodia. It is obvious that visitors on guided tours, like refugees selected on guided tours to refugee camps, can only present a partial and perhaps misleading picture, but their reports certainly offer a view of the social reality that would have been carefully investigated by anyone seriously concerned with the truth. We will divide this review into two sections, considering first the visitors who preceded the two U.S. reporters, then turning to their reports.

The Swedish Ambassador to Peking, Kaj Bjork, led a delegation on a two-week visit to Cambodia in February-March, 1976. The visit was quite newsworthy, for one reason, because it coincided with an apparent bombing in Cambodia of disputed origin. (Cambodia claimed that the United States was responsible, a charge dismissed in the West but apparently not in the Third World).^{[150](#)} Ambassador Bjork was taken to the site of the

bombing. His account of his trip received some notice, including a front-page story in the *New York Times*.¹⁵¹ Ambassador Bjork, the *Times* reported, “described Cambodia as a nation under tight military control and led by nationalistic Marxist intellectuals whose goals are more revolutionary than those of the leaders of China.” He found no private ownership, no money or wages, no private shops. “Mr. Bjork said that he saw no signs of starvation¹⁵² and attributed this to the controversial decision of Cambodia’s leaders to force people out of the cities to work in the rice fields”—a conclusion that is, as we have seen, apparently consistent with the judgment of State Department experts and others. He was struck by the emptiness of Phnom Penh, where he was not permitted to walk freely, though he noticed more activity in the outskirts. In the countryside he saw “total mobilization” to construct water control and irrigation systems and develop agriculture, the basis for all other progress.

As for popular attitudes, Ambassador Bjork said that “around Phnom Penh you could see youngsters marching, all of them with a hoe and a spade, some of them also carrying a gun. I got the very strong impression that the regime has active support from this kind of young person.” The leadership are men who returned from study in Europe with “a great deal of knowledge, a good deal of Marxist theory, and came back to Cambodia and reacted very strongly to existing social conditions. They have very strong collectivist and egalitarian ideas with a very strong overtone of nationalism.” Khieu Samphan, in particular, “gives the impression of being an intellectual of quality”—compare the contemptuous and disparaging account in the best-seller on Cambodia by Barron and Paul of the *Reader’s Digest*.

It might have been interesting to hear more about the impressions of this Swedish delegation, but the press was not interested. Scholars and reporters so assiduous as to discover *Famiglia Cristiana* might have learned something more, with a little enterprise. The Swedish journal *Vietnam Bulletinen* carried an interview with Jan Lundvik, who accompanied the Swedish Ambassador.¹⁵³ His eyewitness report is quite different in character from the picture that dominates the media. Lundvik described the massive efforts to reconstruct the agricultural and irrigation systems, all by hand because there is no equipment. He reports two “lasting impressions” from his visit. The first is “the very strong patriotism” in a population that had been colonized and had not enjoyed complete independence for centuries, patriotism that “expresses itself in a very strong drive for independence—in all domains.” The second lasting impression is the incredible destruction: “One can barely imagine how destroyed are the agricultural areas. Phnom

Penh is like an island in a land destroyed by bombing.” Virtually everything seen on a trip from Phnom Penh to Kompong Thom was destroyed.¹⁵⁴ In Phnom Penh there were 100-200,000 people, he reports.¹⁵⁵ The evacuation of the cities in April 1975, he believes, was not “as noteworthy for the Kampuchean people as had been represented in the West,” because Cambodia is an agricultural country; he also cites historical precedents. The revolution represents “the victory of the countryside over the city,” in a country that is overwhelmingly agrarian—or was, prior to the forced urbanization caused by the U.S. bombing.

Lundvik reports schooling until age 12—at which time children join in production—and severe shortages of medical supplies. He speaks of a great effort to increase the population from the present 8 million to 15 million. He then adds the following comment:

In this connection I want to point out that the articles that are being written about a “bloodbath” in Kampuchea rely on assumptions that have been misunderstood or falsely interpreted. When the Kampucheans say that they can make do with 1 million inhabitants, they mean that they can achieve every task no matter how few they are, not that one is about to liquidate the remainder. The lack of labor power is a problem, and on this account they are trying to achieve a high birthrate.

Quite possibly, Lundvik has in mind here the Ponchaud “quote” in *Le Monde* which we have just discussed. Lundvik’s comment supports Ponchaud’s more qualified observations in personal correspondence, cited above, though not the various and mutually inconsistent published accounts. It is evident not only from these comments but from his observations on what he saw that Lundvik gives little credence to the stories, then already circulating widely, on genocide.¹⁵⁶

In general, Lundvik’s description of popular commitment and patriotism in a land ravaged by war and passionately committed to independence and development is positive and strikingly different in tone from the reports that were designed for a mass audience in the West. It is relevant to the “difficult question” that troubled Twining and others. It is noteworthy that a Swedish visitor does not feel compelled to evade what seems to be a plausible answer to this question: that the regime had support among the peasants.

The Swedish ambassador to Thailand, Jean-Christopher Oberg, visited Cambodia in December, 1977. He said “that he saw no sign of oppression or cruelty...[and]...discounted refugee reports that about one million people had died or been killed since the takeover.” He also “said he saw very few armed Cambodians”—in fact, he saw four, “including one girl”—and “saw nothing to corroborate reports that the Cambodians were working under armed threats.”¹⁵⁷

Ambassadors from Sweden, Finland, and Denmark visited Cambodia again in January,

1978. A Reuters report from Peking on their trip appeared in the *Washington Post* and in an abbreviated version in the *New York Times*,¹⁵⁸ with a second-hand account of what they are said to have told “Nordic correspondents” on their return to Peking. There seems to have been no effort to pursue the matter further. This single second-hand report is uninformative. The Danish Ambassador is quoted as saying that Phnom Penh resembled a “ghost town” (a comment since widely circulated) and the Swedish Ambassador as having said that more land was under cultivation than in 1976 and that “traces of the 1970-1975 war were still considerable” though they have decreased. “There were no signs of starvation.” Little else was reported.

Inquiries to the Swedish Embassy in Washington in an effort to obtain further information about the latest trip have been rebuffed on grounds that the ambassador’s report is not available to the public. What the explanation for this curious response may be, we do not know, and apparently no journalist has been sufficiently intrigued to pursue the matter further.

The Foreign Minister of Thailand spent four days in Phnom Penh in early 1978. The fifth paragraph of Henry Kamm’s story in the *New York Times*, which we quote in its entirety, gives this account of what he saw:

Reporters at the airport were struck by Mr. Uppadit’s effort to say nothing unkind about Cambodia. He volunteered a comment that reports about conditions in Cambodia since the Communist victory might have been exaggerated. Asked about his impressions of life in Phnom Penh, Mr. Uppadit said it had seemed like a normal city. Scandinavian ambassadors who visited the Cambodian capital last month described it as a “ghost city.”¹⁵⁹

The Thai government, of course, is extremely right-wing and passionately anti-Communist, but Uppadit’s comments might be treated with skepticism on grounds that he had returned from an attempt to improve relations with Cambodia.

In April 1976, a Japanese newsman, Naoki Mabuchi, who had remained in Phnom Penh until May 1975, reentered the country and was held in detention in the border town of Poipet for a week. “While in detention, he said, he was free to watch activities in Poipet from the balcony of his room and even to wander outside the building, although he did not stray far.” He “says he speaks the Khmer language well enough to carry on casual conversation.” Mabuchi said that “the people he saw all appeared to be well-fed and in good health. He said his observations convinced him that reports in the Western press ‘placed too much stress on the dark side’ of life in Cambodia under Khmer Rouge rule.” The Bangkok press reported that as he crossed into Cambodia he was beaten, later tortured, by Khmer Rouge soldiers. On his return to Thailand, he denied these reports: “I

was not beaten or tortured. I was treated by the Cambodian officials very nicely. They gave me the same food they had, and I think I gained some weight.”¹⁶⁰

Michael Vickery adds an interesting personal observation based on the story of the Japanese newsman, which has some relevance to the kind of reporting offered concerning Cambodia. He visited the border in Aranyaprathet shortly after the Japanese reporter had crossed into Cambodia. During the next two days that he spent in that town, he heard repeated “eye-witness” reports that the newsman had been “beaten with rifle butts,” “probably killed,” and then “definitely killed,” the last being the accepted account when he left the town. A few months later, Vickery discussed the incident with a member of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, with a special interest in Cambodia, who claimed that the Japanese newsman had obviously lied and had indeed been badly beaten. Why did he lie? To protect future Khmer-Japanese relations or in hopes that he would be invited back, Vickery was informed. The evidence that he had lied was “eyewitness reports.” But what of the eyewitness reports of his death? “Shrug of shoulders.” The U.S. official further admitted that he had not tried to meet the reporter or to judge the credibility of his report. Vickery comments:

No, his possibly true story was of no interest, although, obviously, the rumours of his mistreatment or death were highly interesting. I think this is characteristic of an irresponsible attitude among those who are directly concerned with the manufacture of many of the stories about Cambodia which have been circulated.¹⁶¹

Vickery emphasizes correctly that whatever the facts might have been about the experience of the Japanese newsman, they would tell us little about contemporary Cambodia. It is, nonetheless, interesting to trace the fate of the story.

Four Yugoslav journalists visited Cambodia in March 1978, and reported on their visit in the Belgrade press. U.S. readers could find a translation of excerpts in the radical-pacifist journal *Seven Days*.¹⁶² They estimated the population of Phnom Penh at no more than 20,000, contrary to official estimates of 200,000. Money had been eliminated and the basis of social life was a system of cooperatives, one of which they visited. There they were told that work-related payment had been abolished and “complete equality prevails.” “We didn’t get the impression that the Kampuchean countryside is suffering any food shortages.” They described newly constructed buildings, workers “bustl[ing] past the wavy palms” in Phnom Penh, some “carelessly” carrying arms (the same was true throughout Cambodia, they report, “probably a carryover from the revolutionary days”; there were some armed supervisors of work groups, “although that was not a striking phenomenon”). They visited schools and “huge” construction projects which they found “impressive,” where construction crews work an 8½ hour day with three free days a

month devoted to lectures and discussion of work problems. Among the workers, primarily young, were small children, former Buddhist monks and “students from the now-suspended high schools and universities who, carried away by enthusiasm for their work, were forgetting their French but acquiring other skills.” They report an interview with Prime Minister Pol Pot,¹⁶³ who expressed the hope that the population (which they report to be 7-8 million) will quickly grow to 15-20 million. They were struck by the absence of civil government or other organizations (“with the exception of unions on the factory and enterprise level”) and “the absence, even in mild form, of political indoctrination.” The most striking features of the society were its “egalitarianism,” “fundamentalist radicalism in interpreting the concept of relying on one’s own resources,” and “the very evident sense of national pride” which “is reminiscent of the behavior of a quiet and introverted person whose opinions were hardly ever taken into account earlier, but who now speaks out, unexpectedly, but invariably passionately.”

More extensive excerpts appear in the BBC summary of world broadcasts, from a six-part report by Slavko Stanic.¹⁶⁴ The former residents of the cities, Stanic reports, are now “mainly members of mobile brigades, which go from one building site to another to build new earth dams or construct artificial lakes,” or they live in cooperatives. He reports a 9-hour work day and writes that “we had the opportunity to convince ourselves that there is definitely no longer any hunger in Cambodia.” He describes a school for skilled electricians in a Phnom Penh suburb where “the lecturers were former workers who had passed through the ‘school of the revolution,’” and an agricultural school where the lecturers “were skillfully applying science to the production of seeds for new varieties of rice.” “The hospitals seemed to be in the hands of the old renowned Phnom Penh doctors.” Stanic reports that there are great differences among the cooperatives. “In the rich Province of Battambang and wherever there were villages before, private plots around the houses are much bigger, the peasants have cows and pigs and other livestock in private ownership,” and “there are not many of the pre-fabricated barracks which serve as common canteens in which all members of the co-operatives and their families eat.” In the “newly established economic zones where the former inhabitants of the cities live” conditions are harsher, and “thousands of families live in dwellings on stilts or in improvised barracks,” while it is planned that by the end of 1979 every family should have a house. “The chief concern of the new authorities in Phnom Penh is the construction and rehabilitation of the villages, an increase in the standard of living of the peasants and the growth of the population.” The suburbs of Phnom Penh, he was told, have about 220,000 people. He believes the current “policy of empty towns is a part of the strategy of the

country's defence." New economic installations (e.g., a shipyard) are being installed in the vicinity of towns and their workers housed in the towns, which Stanic assumed would be slowly resettled.

Stanic also comments on the attitude of the regime towards Buddhism. He quotes Yun Yat, the Minister of Culture, Information, and Propaganda: "She told us that 'Buddhism is incompatible with the revolution,' because it was an instrument of exploitation... Buddhism was dead, and the ground had been cleared for the laying of the foundations of a new revolutionary culture." Stanic also reports that at Angkor Wat, "some of the members of our escort hurried as a sign of respect to touch images of Buddha carved in stone. Some high ranking Party cadres also greeted us in the Buddhist manner when they met us, and one of the Buddhist priests who has replaced the robe with the revolutionary uniform disagreed with Minister Yun Yat. He told us that Buddhism and communism had the same humane goals, and that there was no great antagonism between them."

Reports of the Yugoslav visit appeared in the U.S. press. Michael Dobbs, in a report from Belgrade,¹⁶⁵ emphasized the abandonment of Phnom Penh and the "new order... based on the village ..." and on the cooperative and mobile brigade. "The Yugoslavs do not appear to have raised the controversial question of the hundreds of thousands of people believed to have been killed by the Khmer Rouge shortly after their victory," Dobbs writes in a typical reference to what "is believed"; "The only allusion to such massacres was made by the *Politika* correspondent, Ranchic, who said: 'We were inclined to believe the statement of our guides that the class enemy has been relatively quickly eliminated in Cambodia.'" The more favorable impressions that appear in the actual report are ignored or underplayed.

Citing the Yugoslav visit, AP reported that "Cambodia is training boys and girls as young as 12 to replace the industrial working class that was swept away after the Communist takeover three years ago."¹⁶⁶ The reference to the "industrial working class that was swept away" by the Communists and is now being "replaced" is an embellishment of the Yugoslav report by AP. In fact, the "industrial working class" was very small and there is no indication in the Yugoslav report that it was "swept away." Refugees from the Battambang area, for example, report that in general workers remained in their jobs in a jute processing plant outside Battambang after the war.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps AP has confused its dates and the agent of destruction; it is true that some of the few Cambodian industrial installations, and presumably workers and their families as well, were "swept away" by U.S. bombers, without noticeable indignation in the media. Programs of

vocational training for 12-year-olds are, furthermore, not generally regarded as an atrocity in a poor peasant society. The anti-Communist Sihanouk regime, for example, took pride in its programs of technical and vocational training in “model primary schools” and featured pictures of young children working with industrial machinery in its information publications, noting that the youth must not “take refuge in administrative careers” but must “have the ideal of productive labor.”¹⁶⁸ We do not recall protests in the West over such savagery.

The AP report also describes work-study programs and a nine-hour work day with evenings “set aside for alternating classes of political indoctrination and technical education.” Again, a nine-hour work day hardly seems a major atrocity in a country of the economic status of contemporary Cambodia, and the Yugoslav report actually noted “the absence, even in mild form, of political indoctrination,” as we have seen.

The *New York Times* carried a report of the Yugoslav visit by David A. Andelman from Belgrade.¹⁶⁹ He repeats Ranchic’s comment, cited above, and the report of the abandonment of Phnom Penh (he reports the Yugoslav journalists as writing that the population was about 200,000, “though most seem to live in the surrounding area and only about 10,000 downtown”). He also reports their account of work brigades with the comment that “it was clear that they were impressed labor,” without explaining how this was clear. He too downplays or ignores the more favorable impressions conveyed, for the most part. Henry Kamm cited the Yugoslav visit in a column devoted to refugee reports.¹⁷⁰ He tells us that one of the Yugoslav journalists “reported that they were appalled by much of what they saw, although, restricted by the conventions of Communist fraternalism, they said so only implicitly in their dispatches.”¹⁷¹ As evidence, he cites their report of “child labor in rigorous agricultural tasks” which the Cambodians urged them to film despite the alleged statement of a Yugoslav TV reporter that this “would make a bad impression on the outside world.”¹⁷² Kamm claims that the Yugoslav reports bear out the refugee accounts of “continuing bloodletting, even among factions of the ruling party, and starvation, nationwide forced labor and regimentation,” with a work day beginning at 4 a.m. and lasting often until 10 p.m. How he derived these conclusions from published accounts or the reports concerning them in the U.S. press he does not say.

François Rigaux of the Center for International Law of the Catholic University of Louvain was a member of a delegation of the Association Belgique-Kampuchea who spent two weeks in Cambodia in mid-1978, covering 2,000 km. in several regions of the country and engaging in discussion with representatives of regional and municipal

administrations, cooperatives, factories, workers groups, schools, hospitals and government. He has written a very detailed factual and analytic report of his experiences, which presumably would be available to journalists and others interested in his impressions of what he found.¹⁷³

Initially struck by the apparent emptiness of Phnom Penh, Rigaux discovered after a few days that quite a few sections were settled and that people appeared to be engaged in normal urban existence. The surrounding industrial sections were more densely settled, and again, life seemed quite normal. The most striking feature of the cities was the complete absence of commerce.

In the countryside, people appeared to be well-fed, quick to enter into conversation, jokes and laughter, and in general engaged in normal activities with good-will, as far as he could determine. Rigaux was struck by the extreme decentralization and the progress in agricultural development. Schools combined study with light work (raising animals, cultivating fruits and vegetables, etc.), and the same was true in a secondary school that he visited. In a Phnom Penh factory, too, he found that workers were raising their own pigs, poultry, and vegetables. Cadres and administrative personnel participated in productive labor as well as taking responsibility for cleaning offices and so on.

Like other visitors, Rigaux was taken to the Ang Tassom collective. He reports that the work force was divided into three categories: people under 35 were responsible for heavy work, and those who were unmarried were assigned work in more remote areas; those in the 35-55 age bracket and young mothers carried out lighter work near their homes; and such activities as weaving and basketwork were reserved for people over 55. The cooperative had a medical center and primary school with four hours of instruction a day for children and some adult education. Each family had its own house with an adjoining area for raising tobacco, fruit, etc.

In the area of family life, his own professional specialty, Rigaux reports that he found a picture not unlike that of Western European villages before the industrial revolution, with a strong emphasis on family life. Children over a year of age had collective care during the work day, and he reports efforts to arrange for married couples and families to share related occupations where possible. With the extreme decentralization and local arrangements for personal affairs, bureaucracy appeared to be reduced to a minimum.

Rigaux takes the “political objective” to have been “to place the entire population under the conditions of life and work of the poorest, the peasants.” What there was, was shared equally. Children of 15 years of age were expected to devote themselves to

productive labor, a situation that should, he writes, be “compared to the fate of a great number of children of third world countries of the same age who are beggars or prostitutes [or, we may add, the 52 million child laborers, including 29 million in South Asia, whose fate evokes no outrage], rather than to the privileged condition of well-educated adolescents of the industrialized societies.” Similarly, medical care is not concentrated in the cities and reserved for the elite but is distributed through the most backward regions with an emphasis on preventive medicine and hygiene.

“The best propaganda for the new regime,” Rigaux writes, was the attitudes and behavior of the older peasants whom he came upon by chance during his travels. To Rigaux, they appeared to have acquired dignity, serenity, and security after a lifetime of oppression and violence.

Rigaux also reports on the discussion meetings for arranging work schedules and other tasks at various levels and the methods for selecting administrative personnel. He believes that factories, schools, cooperatives, and other organizations permitted a substantial degree of free exchange of opinion and popular decision-making. He notes the absence of the rights taken for granted in Western industrial societies, but points out that not only is the level of economic development incomparable, but also there were, he believes, elements of control over work and supervisors that are foreign to the industrial democracies.

Rigaux remains unconvinced by the explanations offered by the regime with regard to repressive policies after liberation, including severe punishment and execution. He notes, however, that the conditions described with horror by many of the refugees (which he believes have “considerably improved”) are “those of the majority of the Khmer peasants, conditions of which [the refugees] were unaware during the period when their privilege permitted them to keep at a distance” from the lives of the poor.

Rigaux believes that “relative to what it was before liberation, or compared to that of the peasants of Bangladesh, India or Iran..., the condition of the Khmer peasant has improved notably.” For urban or Western elites, the results are “shocking,” in part because of the deliberate insistence on equality, which requires that all share in “the conditions of work to which the immense majority of the world’s population have been subjected for millenia.” Now everyone faces “the exalting task of cooperating in the progressive improvement of the conditions of life of the entire population.” “Conceived in a very poor country ravaged by war, the economic and political system of Cambodia does not pretend to be a model for an advanced industrial society, but it would be foolish to judge it in accordance with the needs and experiences” of such societies.

No doubt Rigaux, like other visitors, was shown what the regime wanted him to see. The picture he presents in his detailed observations should be worth some attention, one might imagine, and in fact might help explain both the apparent commitment of significant parts of the population to the new regime and the horror and indignation of others at its practices. As he notes, he had no opportunity to assess the veracity of the many stories of massacre and cruel oppression, but again, we note that there is no direct inconsistency between these stories and the quite different impression obtained by visitors in a country that is, by all accounts, highly decentralized and perhaps quite varied from place to place.

There were many other visitors to Cambodia from the Scandinavian countries, some from Communist groups, some non-Communists from “friendship associations,” some journalists. Their reports appeared in the mainstream press and journals in Sweden and Denmark, but have yet to be mentioned in the United States, though the sources are hardly obscure and some of the visitors (e.g., Jan Myrdal) are quite well-known in the United States. We will not review their reports, which are in general quite favorable though often qualified by the observation that while they personally witnessed scenes throughout the country of people engaged in productive work with apparent contentment and enthusiasm (working a 9-hour day, but according to Gunnar Bergstrom, at a slower pace than is typical in Europe), they do not speak Khmer and cannot comment on what they were not shown. These visitors too report no indications of starvation or malnutrition.

A Japanese delegation from the Peking embassy visiting in the fall of 1978, reported that the regime was stable and “the people did not seem undernourished” (“there were plenty of vegetables and fruit, and the peasants’ diet could be supplemented by pork”). An economist who had been in Cambodia during the Lon Nol regime “observed that rice production and irrigation are now better organised.” Phnom Penh “is a desolate city by day” but “a delegation member said he saw large numbers of people returning to the city in the evening from small-scale industries located outside.”¹⁷⁴ U.S. readers, deluged with reports about Cambodian horrors at exactly this period (as before), were thoughtfully spared any exposure to the reports of the Japanese embassy delegation.

To our knowledge, that exhausts the accounts on the part of visitors who might, conceivably, be taken seriously in the West, prior to the visit of the two U.S. reporters in December 1978.¹⁷⁵ There were others. A visit by a group led by an “editor of a Chicago-based Marxist weekly” received a 38-line notice in the *New York Times*¹⁷⁶ reporting only that they “painted a glowing picture of life under the Communists” and denied atrocity claims. Daniel Burstein, editor of the

Communist Party Marxist-Leninist newspaper *The Call* (Chicago) was interviewed on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* (see note 53), where, again, he denied these claims on the basis of interviews with “average people” in the cities and countryside. Their account will naturally be given little credence in the West, since it is taken for granted that this Maoist group, with their ideological preconceptions, will report favorably on their visit. Skepticism is no doubt in order, though for accuracy, we should add that exactly the same is true in the case of reports by John Barron and Anthony Paul in the *Reader’s Digest* of stories allegedly told them by “promising subjects,” to whom they were “guided” by Thai officials, or reports by Henry Kamm of what he claims to have heard from a Cambodian in a cage in a Thai police station. If refugee reports transmitted by these highly dubious sources are given any attention, there could be no good reason to ignore the eyewitness reports of the only U.S. citizens to have visited Cambodia prior to December 1978. It should come as no surprise, however, that the accounts of the U.S. Marxist-Leninists were ignored or ridiculed in the press, while journalists and scholars greeted Barron-Paul, Kamm, et al., as unbiased seekers after the truth.

There is more to the Burstein story. Given the uniqueness of his visit, major media enterprises had offered to publish photographs and text to be provided by Burstein. Specifically, he received payment for submitted material from *Time*, *Newsweek*, ABC television, and the *Washington Post*. Many months later, the first three stalwarts of the Free Press had definitely rejected the text and photographs (refusing suggestions to rewrite, etc.), while the fourth was still mulling the question over. It is noteworthy that *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Washington Post*¹⁷⁷ all had featured the faked photographs discussed earlier long after the fabrication was exposed, refusing to publish letters stating the unquestioned facts or to print retractions.

Visitors and refugees transmit quite different pictures. Refugees were brutalized, oppressed or discontented; otherwise they would not be refugees. Visitors are offered only a partial view, and they were for the most part initially sympathetic. We should anticipate, then, that visitors’ accounts will be more favorable than those of refugees—though, as we have noted, and will see again, refugee accounts are not so uniform as the media barrage depicts. Note again that when we correct for the factors mentioned, conflicts between the refugee and visitor accounts need not be taken as indicating that one or the other must be dismissed; all might be accurate, in a country that presents a mixed picture with considerable local variation. That, in fact, would appear to be a fair conclusion from the full range of evidence so far available.

The media, however, pursue a different course. A highly selected version of what refugees have reported under quite unfavorable conditions was transmitted by observers of evident bias and low credibility, and given massive publicity as unquestionable fact. Reports of visitors were ignored or distorted. This was not an absolutely uniform picture, but it was a fairly general one. We have given a number of examples in the course of the exposition. A look at the material featured in the press in the fall of 1978, at the end of the period under review, confirms this picture.

The *New York Times Magazine* carried a major story by Henry Kamm in November entitled “The Agony of Cambodia.”¹⁷⁸ We have already investigated examples of Kamm’s reporting on Timor and Vietnam, noting his extreme bias and unreliability.¹⁷⁹ We have also seen how he distorted the account by the Yugoslav reporters. In the case of Vietnam, as we saw in chapter 4, Kamm pretended for a long period that there was no source of information apart from refugee reports, an obvious falsehood. By November 1978, Kamm evidently recognized that the pretense must also be dropped in the case of Cambodia. By that time U.S. journalists and other non-Communist observers had received invitations, and there were many reports available (outside of the Free Press) such as those we have surveyed. Kamm therefore describes the sources available as follows:

With the country almost hermetically sealed off from the world, except for rare and carefully guided tours for carefully selected visitors, refugees who cross the heavily mined and closely guarded borders to Thailand and Vietnam are the only reliable source of information about life in Cambodia since the Khmer Rouge troops strode into Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975.

In short, we can continue to dismiss the reports of visitors—as Kamm proceeds to do—and rely solely on what Kamm claims to have heard from the refugees he interviewed under the circumstances already described, or reports transmitted from Vietnam, which is at war with Cambodia. These reports are “reliable”; others are not.

Kamm then proceeds to outline what he says he heard from refugees. Much of it is inconsistent with what visitors have reported, from their own direct experience. But this fact deserves no comment, since the visitors have already been dismissed as unreliable. Thus, Kamm says that the Phnom Penh radio “is not listened to by the people of Cambodia, who have no radios.” In contrast, Gunnar Bergstrom of the Swedish-Kampuchea Friendship Association (non-Communist, but sympathetic to the regime) reports that peasants had radios in the cooperatives he visited and listened to the radio regularly.¹⁸⁰ Kamm also claims that the refugee reports are “told with striking similarity of detail in hundreds of refugee interviews.” As we have seen, and will again see below, the reports vary considerably, as attested by qualified and independent observers. Kamm does

not comment on the conditions of his interviews—though once again he describes an interview in a Thai police station—or what these conditions imply. He describes a regular work day of 13 hours with a half-hour break, again without reference to reports of visitors that explicitly contradict this account. His major conclusion is that “Cambodia’s people labor to exhaustion, but they do not eat the rice they grow.” “In a country once abundant with food, where hunger was the one human misery almost unknown, Cambodians go hungry all the time.” This he describes as a “mystery.” There seems to be adequate rice production, and little is exported, but the people are starving. He concludes that “rational explanations have perhaps never been the surest guide to understanding” Cambodia. Rational explanation is indeed difficult when dubious premises and preconceived conclusions must be reconciled with recalcitrant facts, a problem familiar to propagandists everywhere. Kamm does not tell us whether rational explanations are a surer guide to understanding the behavior of a superpower that pounded Cambodia to dust, or the practice of journalists who try to conceal the long-term impact of that not insignificant fact, perhaps because he knows that rational explanations do suffice in this case, unfortunately.

Kamm’s belief that hunger was “almost unknown” in prewar Cambodia is in flat contradiction to analyses of the peasant society by specialists, who conclude that hunger and even starvation were common. His report that the people are now starving is in flat contradiction to the eyewitness testimony of non-Communist visitors, including the Swedish and Japanese embassy delegations as well as others. A possible resolution of his “mystery” is that the accounts he claims to have gathered in Thai police stations or under similar conditions of surveillance and coercion are inaccurate, and that even accurate refugee accounts give only a partial indication of a more complex reality. Even if we grant that Kamm is transmitting accurately what he heard, that would seem a plausible solution, but it is one that he is incapable of considering on ideological grounds, leaving him no alternative but to conclude that “what happens to the rice of Cambodia is one of the many mysteries enveloping the country.”

Kamm’s account is presented in the *New York Times* as “fact,” not as the reactions of a highly biased observer of limited credibility. And it is taken as simple fact by others who have been trained to rely on the press without critical standards. Thus Mary McGrory, a liberal syndicated columnist who was strongly opposed to the U.S. war in Indochina, writes that “except for a Yugoslav television crew that was admitted by the government, the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, as it is now called, has been cut off from the outside world. The ghastly accounts of its existence come from refugees all of whom tell the

story...,”one of unrelieved misery and massacre: “In a recent article in the *New York Times*, Henry Kamm pointed out that while rice production is up, the Cambodians are on near-starvation rations.”¹⁸¹

On the same day that the *New York Times* published Kamm’s article on Cambodia, the *Boston Globe* published a front-page feature story with a headline running across the entire top of the front page: “Cambodia now a ‘slaughterhouse,’ say refugees.”¹⁸² The report, by Michael Parks, is reprinted from the *Baltimore Sun*, and was also given front-page coverage elsewhere.¹⁸³ It is unclear why this story, which repeats material that has been presented in abundance in the press, adding nothing new or particularly topical, merits a screaming front-page headline. Parks relies almost entirely on refugee accounts; he does not indicate whether he heard these accounts himself or is transmitting them from some other source. These accounts, he writes, “vary little” and provide a “uniform catalogue of horrors that verges on genocide.” He repeats examples of the sort that have been widely publicized in the West since mid-1975.

Parks also refers to Japanese visitors to Cambodia, whom he does not identify, including “a Japanese correspondent” and “sympathetic visitors.” He states that their description of cooperatives was “almost as grim” as the refugee stories of virtual genocide. This description he presents as follows: “With 5,000 persons, it had just brought rice production up to 1975 levels. The first efforts were just being made to build simple houses; a reopened elementary school had 190 children.” Since he does not identify his source, we cannot judge whether his reference to “1975 levels” is correct; “prewar levels” seems more likely, considering what is known of 1975 levels, and Parks is silent on why it was necessary to try to achieve earlier levels of rice production. It is, perhaps, less than obvious that the description just quoted is “almost as grim” as a story of virtual genocide. This comment gives some insight into the way he evaluates the data available to him, however.

Parks also quotes the unidentified Japanese correspondent who writes (“nonetheless”): “We received the impression that these people [in the cooperative] had adjusted well to their new environment. In many ways the leisurely relaxed atmosphere peculiar to rural areas in the tropics had survived the political changes” (perhaps it is this remark that is “almost as grim” as a description of virtual genocide). Parks notes that the Japanese visitors asserted “that the peasants were well fed,” but claims that they calculated the average diet at the cooperative as only 7 or 8 ounces of rice a day, far below other estimates; lacking any reference, his claim cannot be checked.

Parks is outraged by the report he attributes to the Japanese visitors that “Khmer Rouge leaders in Phnom Penh were living in luxury.” Henry Kamm, in his story on the same day, also observes scornfully that government leaders “look remarkably well-fed, in splendid health and at ease in comfortable surroundings,” while the population, he claims, is starving. Note again that visitors have reported that the population seems well fed, while at least some refugees and the leading U.S. government specialists have denied that Khmer Rouge cadres receive privileged treatment.¹⁸⁴ But let us suppose that Park and Kamm are correct. If so, then Cambodia is similar in this respect to the other countries on their regular beat, where a minority lives in fabulous luxury while the peasants and urban slum dwellers subsist in misery. This fact, however, elicits no outrage beyond Indochina (the one region where there is reason to believe it is untrue).¹⁸⁵

We mentioned earlier William Shawcross’s lengthy article on Cambodia in *New Times*, in which he expresses great concern over child labor—in Cambodia.¹⁸⁶ Shawcross observes that Cambodia has been visited by Yugoslav journalists, “delegates from friendly Maoist parties in the West and trade groups from various Southeast Asian countries.” He too states that in Cambodia “before the war, there was (in Southeast Asian terms) little hunger and no famine” and “the way of life was indolent”; so it may have appeared from a visit to Phnom Penh. He gives what appears to be a paraphrase of the Yugoslav report, but with a marked difference in tone. The Cambodians, he writes, “have developed the concept of the mobile Gulag,” referring to the fact reported by Stanic and others that work teams move to wherever their labor is required. Furthermore, “Quite apart from shortages of food, life in the new cooperatives is hard. Work begins at 5 A.M. and lasts for at least nine hours,” and there is often another shift at night. He does not explain how he knows that the work teams are a “mobile Gulag” rather than an attempt to rebuild a country destroyed by war. Nor does he comment on the apparent success of these efforts in overcoming the devastating effects of the U.S. war, which he describes, including the destruction of the agricultural system. He also fails to explain why he is so offended by a 9-hour work day in an impoverished peasant country. If indeed the cooperatives have managed to reduce working hours to a 9-hour day with occasional extra shifts, that would seem to be a considerable accomplishment. Such a work schedule was not at all unusual, for example, in Israeli kibbutzim a few years ago, to take an example from a far richer country receiving enormous aid from abroad, where such efforts were not denounced as evidence of the extraordinary harshness of the regime. For some Western journalists, a 9-hour work day may seem a major atrocity. Peasants, or for that matter farmers and workers in advanced countries, might have a rather different view.

Shawcross also states that “an estimated two million people, nearly one quarter of the population, have been killed in war and in internal purges.” Since less than a million were reportedly killed in the war, Shawcross is asserting that over a million have been killed “in internal purges” since, a figure about ten times as high as the estimates by Barron-Paul or Ponchaud. He cites no source for this “estimate.” But this is again typical of the numbers game in the case of Cambodia.

Shawcross observes that the numbers are less important than the question “whether or not the government has used murder and terror as deliberate acts of policy.” He writes: “The evidence is overwhelming that it has done so. Madness of this nature defies rationalization.” He does not, here or elsewhere, present evidence that the use of terror is systematic and deliberate policy, though he does relay reports of refugees who have recounted gruesome tales of terror. Presumably, he concludes from these reports that the policy of the regime was one of deliberate murder and terror. Perhaps his conclusion is correct, despite his failure to construct a case.¹⁸⁷ Again, it is noteworthy that neither the quality of his evidence, its selection, the demonstrated lack of credibility of his major sources (of which he was by then aware, at least in part), or the vast gap between his evidence and his conclusions seems to him to require any discussion.

Here as elsewhere Shawcross is quite careful to discuss the effects of U.S. military and diplomatic intervention. Others are less scrupulous in this regard. Thus Jack Anderson, interviewing Lon Nol (“a sad symbol of the serene little country of Cambodia, which he once ruled”) presents the pre-1975 history as follows:

The Cambodians are a gentle if emotional people. They wanted only to live in peace in their lush kingdom, with its rich alluvial soil, washed by the pelting rains. But with the collapse of U.S. power in Southeast Asia, Lon Nol gave way to a fanatic regime that has brutalized the populace. Hundreds of thousands have been murdered by their new rulers, and other thousands have fled in terror.¹⁸⁸

Anderson is one of the country’s major liberal syndicated columnists, who has devoted many columns to Cambodian atrocities, beginning with a report on June 4, 1975, alleging that the Khmer Rouge “may be guilty of genocide against their own people.”¹⁸⁹ He has ample staff and resources, and surely knows that it was not simply “the collapse of U.S. power in Southeast Asia” that is responsible for starvation, disease, destruction, and revenge in Cambodia. But it is appropriate, in the current phase of imperial ideology, to excise from history other major factors with which he is quite familiar (as well as others that he may know nothing of, such as the realities of peasant existence), and to speak of Cambodia as a “serene little country” of “gentle people” plunged into disaster and misery by the “collapse of U.S. power.”

In discussing Sihanouk's characterization of Communist Cambodia in the preface to this volume, we pointed out that he presented a dual picture, with aspects that were, from his point of view, both positive and negative. The reports of visitors tend to substantiate the picture he presented on the basis of the very limited evidence available to him. But their reports were either ignored, or else generally reinterpreted in the Free Press to conform to the required negative image. The two U.S. reporters who visited in December 1978, Richard Dudman and Elizabeth Becker, were able to reach an unusually large audience with their own words.¹⁹⁰

The *New York Times* dismissed their visit in a line. Bernard Weinraub, in the 11th paragraph of a 13-paragraph story on reported purges in Cambodia, remarked that their visit "produced no substantial surprises since the visitors saw only what the government wanted them to see."¹⁹¹ It is true enough that their visit produced no substantial surprises, at least for people who were not restricted to the Free Press for their information. In fact, what Dudman and Becker observed was not very different from what had been reported by earlier visitors. But it was markedly different from what the *New York Times* and other journals had been offering as standard fare, as we see at once when we compare their eyewitness reports with the version of postwar Cambodia that had been offered by the *Reader's Digest*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books* and other mainstream Western sources.

Richard Dudman, an experienced foreign correspondent with excellent credentials, commented that although "the visit amounted to a conducted tour...there was plenty of opportunity for observation in tours of 11 of the 19 provinces." His conclusions conform to the dual picture that emerges from consideration of the range of evidence previously available:

It seemed evident throughout this reporter's visit to Cambodia before the recent Vietnamese attack that the new Cambodia's version of Communism had no place in it for anyone who wanted to read, write, or even think independently, or for anyone who wanted to own more than a bare minimum of personal property.

At the same time, the physical conditions of life may well have improved for many peasants and former urban dwellers—possibly for the vast majority of the population, as the regime claimed.

Apart from the "austere standard of hard manual labor" and restrictions on "the freedoms accepted or at least professed by most of the rest of the world" that Dudman observed, his inability to make contact with former urban residents tended to confirm the dark picture of repression and atrocities conveyed by the refugee accounts that have been publicized. "The new Communist Cambodia," Dudman wrote, "became one huge work camp, but its people were clearly not being worked to death and starved to death as

foreign critics often charged”:

What I have found in two weeks of touring Pol Pot's Cambodia—under strict government supervision but with a good opportunity for observation—was a regimented life of hard work for most Cambodians, leavened, however, by much improved housing, regular issuance of clothing, and an assurance of apparently adequate food. I did not find the grim picture painted by the thousands of refugees who couldn't take the new order and fled to Thailand or Vietnam. In this lull between wars, those who remain appeared to be reasonably relaxed at the height of the busy harvest season. They sometimes leaned on their hoes like farm workers everywhere. And they often stared and then smiled and waved at the rare sight of Western faces. Workers usually appeared to be operating under their own direction. There were no signs of government cadres giving orders or armed guards enforcing the working hours, although individuals seemed to know what was expected.

The work day, Dudman found, lasted from about 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. and again from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Dudman found the housing program (“one of the world's great housing programs”) particularly impressive, “a sudden mass upgrading of the individual family homes from the standard that has existed for centuries,” which “probably meant better living, too, for the hundreds of thousands of country people who were driven into the cities by the five year war ...” as well as for the peasants who remained on the land. Until the Vietnamese invasion, prospects for economic development “appeared bright.” Cambodia was feeding itself and had resumed rice exports, and the crucial water-control programs of the postwar years appeared to have been generally a success. He saw no evidence of starvation, contrary to standard claims in the U.S. media, and found the country “to be flourishing and potentially prosperous—at least until the Vietnamese invaders moved in.” U.S. specialists, Dudman wrote, “have acknowledged that the Cambodian claim of reviving rice production to the point of resuming exports would, if true, be a spectacular achievement.” It may well have been true.

Dudman also describes “a wide range of industrial growth—concentrated more in tiny and primitive cottage industries such as brick-making, silk spinning, and local blacksmith shops, but including also a fairly sophisticated rubber factory...” Development was decentralized and aimed for a high degree of local self-sufficiency. He describes “a progressive industrial growth plan” that seemed not unrealistic, judging by the account that he and earlier visitors have given. He also gives a brief account of the organization of the cooperatives.

Recognizing that the peasant population probably did not regard the “austere standard of hard manual labor” (specifically, a nine-hour work day) as an onerous imposition of the regime, and may not have been overly concerned that privileged urban sectors were compelled to share the hard but improving life of the poorer peasants, one might reach the conclusion that much of the population may well have supported the regime, particularly if it is true, as Dudman was informed but could not establish, that “decisions were taken

collectively” in the cooperatives and even the army.

Elizabeth Becker’s six-part series in the *Washington Post* covers much the same ground in less depth, and is in some ways more revealing about the character of U.S. journalism than it is about Cambodia. She found the development program generally incomprehensible: “no one seems able to offer a coherent philosophical basis for the extreme upheaval that has taken place.” She does not go into how this alleged failure compares, say, with the “philosophical basis” for the developments in far more favored Thailand discussed in the preface to this volume, or comparable phenomena in other regions where a dependency model has been imposed. She writes that she is “forced to conclude” that the economic system “seems to be working,” revealing plainly the initial bias that colored all of her observations. It is also remarkable to see how uncritically she accepted Cambodian charges which, she claims, supported U.S. positions during the Vietnam war. She writes that she was given “a remarkable new document”—namely the Cambodian government *Livre Noir* of September 1978,^{[192](#)} which had in fact been on sale in New York well before she left for Cambodia—which “confirms” U.S. claims and “discloses” that there were 200,000 to 300,000 Vietcong in the northeast region of Cambodia, including the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Party (COSVN), when Nixon ordered the 1970 invasion. It estimates the total number of Vietcong in Cambodia in 1970 at 1.5-2 million.^{[193](#)} The *Livre Noir*, which is a bitter attack on the Vietnamese Communists, is certainly worth reading, but surely no serious commentator would accept uncritically a propaganda document produced in the midst of an ongoing war. U.S. reporters have rarely paid attention to material from comparable sources “confirming” or “disclosing” alleged facts that contradict positions taken by the U.S. government.^{[194](#)}

We have already noted the *New York Times* dismissal of the Dudman-Becker visit. *Newsweek* ran an uninformative article by Becker^{[195](#)} and *Time* reviewed their visit in an article that simply repeated its familiar rhetoric about “the shroud of terror and darkness” of a regime that was attempting to “counteract its worldwide image as a merciless, anonymous and genocidal regime,” systematically avoiding the direct observations that Dudman (and, in part, Becker) had reported, in particular, those that were positive.^{[196](#)}

Malcolm Caldwell was assassinated on the final day of the visit, in Phnom Penh. According to Dudman, “Caldwell expressed general sympathy with the Cambodian brand of Communism prior to the Vietnamese invasion” and “the report that he was experiencing a change in views was not true,” as Dudman knew from conversations throughout the two-week trip “up to a few hours of his death.” In these conversations, “Caldwell remained

sympathetic to the Cambodian revolution, without blinding himself to its faults,” likening it to early stages of the industrial revolution in England. It “seems out of the question,” Dudman writes, that the Cambodian government, which “had everything to lose from the incident,” could have had anything to do with the assassination, contrary to speculations that have been rife. Dudman’s conclusion seems well-founded. The true story will probably never be known, but the consequences of the assassination are clear enough. It is most unlikely that Caldwell’s account of what he had seen would have reached any segment of international opinion apart from the left. And for the left, judging by what he had written in personal letters and articles before his trip and by the fact that “he remained fully sympathetic to the Cambodian revolution” (Dudman), his message would have tended to support the Pol Pot regime and to undermine the justification for the Vietnamese invasion that was being presented in the Western and Soviet bloc press.¹⁹⁷

As we have seen, refugee accounts are not as uniform as accounts in the press suggest. A further look bears out the conclusion. The most extensive published report of a refugee interview, to our knowledge, is a study based on conversations with Peang Sophi, who escaped from Cambodia in January, 1976, and arrived in Australia three months later.¹⁹⁸ “His account of life under the revolutionary regime,” Chandler comments,

differs in two important ways from others readily available in the West. Firstly, he spent over six months working actively—and rather happily—under revolutionary guidance; unlike many refugees, he was not punished by the regime for having roots in the “old society.” Secondly, from about September onwards, he enjoyed considerable responsibility, as the “economic” foreman of an 800-man rural work team.

Chandler also observes that his experiences may not be typical. He lived in a province with “a unique (but recent) revolutionary tradition” and unusual prosperity, where “revolutionary cadre...may have been especially vengeful and undisciplined, too; certainly most tales of atrocities told by refugees refer to events in Battambang” [Sophi’s province].¹⁹⁹ Sophi reports that the Khmer Rouge cadre were “thin and pale,” mostly young peasants. They admitted that in the early stages of liberation “they were subject to ‘uncontrollable hatred’” and that “in this mood” conducted executions of Lon Nol officials and destroyed military equipment. They were “real country people, from *far* away” (Sophi’s emphasis), illiterate, unfamiliar with urban amenities and frightened even of tin cans. “One speaker allegedly said: ‘We were so angry when we came out of the forest that we didn’t want to spare even a baby in its cradle.’” But Sophi reports that the executions were ordered halted shortly after. The cadres had no special privileges and were friendly in their relations with villagers and workers. Their program was successful because it seemed attractive, with a special appeal to youth. “Although he remained unconvinced by the totality of Khmer Rouge teaching, Sophi was impressed by the integrity and morale of

many cadre, and by the ideology embodied in official directives and revolutionary songs.” Their goals were a vast increase in the population, distribution of power and responsibility to people with poor peasant background,²⁰⁰ hard work (though working conditions, he says, were not particularly severe, hours were flexible, and rations usually sufficient), “the moral value of collective labour,” and true independence based on self-reliance. Differences in status were obliterated, along with “begging and arrogance,” and there was a consistent “puritanical strain” in regulations. Obviously unhappy with the new society, Sophi nevertheless offers an account that is not unsympathetic—and that has yet to be reported in the mass media, to our knowledge. His account also suggests an answer to the “difficult question,” though one too unwelcome to be reported.

Chandler elaborated on these observations in an article in *Commonweal*.²⁰¹ Here he stressed again how one-sided is the information available from refugees—by definition, those disaffected with the regime. Again he points out that the worst reports are from the Northwest, “where radical politics before liberation were weak, rural class differences especially pronounced, and agricultural production higher than elsewhere in the country. For these reasons the liberating forces there seem to have been especially vengeful and undisciplined.” He then adds the qualification already cited in note 199.

Chandler makes some important and generally forgotten historical observations. Peasants, he writes, “have been ‘outside history’ for many years”:

we know very little, in a quantitative or political terms, about the mass of Cambodian society, many of whom, for most of their history, appear to have been slaves of one sort or another. The frequency of locally-led rebellions in the nineteenth century—against the Thai, the Vietnamese, the French and local officials—suggests that Cambodian peasants were not as peaceable as their own mythology, reinforced by the French, would lead us to believe.

The French were not concerned with the peasantry, “preferring to reconstruct Cambodia’s ancient temples, nurture a small elite, and modernize the economy to provide surpluses of rice and rubber.” Little is known of what actually went on in earlier history, the colonial period, or the “early independence period” (1953-1970).²⁰²

Lack of familiarity with the historical experience of the Khmer peasants makes it difficult to comprehend what lies behind the violence of the post-revolutionary period, though the atrocities of the civil war were reported at the time,²⁰³ along with the impact of the U.S. war.²⁰⁴ Citing Sophi, Chandler speaks of the “uncontrollable hatred” that led to early postwar atrocities in Battambang. He discusses the revolutionary ideology in terms similar to those already outlined. Continuing, Chandler comments:

Collective self-reliance or autarky, as preached by the regime, contrasts sharply with what might be called the slave mentality that suffused pre-revolutionary Cambodia and made it so “peaceful” and “charming” to the

elite and to most outsiders—for perhaps two thousand years...In the Cambodian case, in 1976, autarky makes sense, both in terms of recent experience—American intervention, and what is seen as the Western-induced corruption of previous regimes—and in terms of Cambodia’s long history of conflict with Vietnam...Self-reliance also explains turning away from Cambodia’s past to make a society where there are “no rich and no poor, no exploiters and no exploited.”²⁰⁵

Chandler asks: “Is the price for liberation, in human terms, too high?” On this question, he says, “we Americans with our squalid record in Cambodia should be ‘cautiously optimistic’ about the new regime, ‘or else shut up’” (citing a friend), though he adds that the closed character of the regime (not to speak of refugee reports) raises serious doubts about such cautious optimism.

It would be incorrect to say that such relatively positive, though tempered comments on the revolutionary regime do not appear in the critical literature concerning Cambodia. It would be correct to say, however, that where they did appear, they were ignored as the story filtered through to a mass audience. Ponchaud, for example, describes the brutality of the civil war and the destructiveness of the U.S. attack, and a major theme of his book—though one could hardly know this from reviews and press comment—is his discussion of the “genuine egalitarian revolution” in Cambodia, where there is a new “spirit of responsibility” and “inventiveness” that “represents a revolution in the traditional mentality”: with their vast construction projects, “the people of Kampuchea are now making a thousand-year-old dream come true” and both men and women find new pride in driving trucks and other constructive work.²⁰⁶ Where this important theme of his book is mentioned at all, it is offered as evidence of “destruction of a culture.” Ponchaud, clearly, feels that the price was far too high, and perhaps he is right; but it is important to stress that contrary to the second-hand impression of reviews and press commentary, he did focus attention on these aspects of the new regime, which were as little noted or understood in the media as the impact of the U.S. war.²⁰⁷

The real conditions of Cambodian peasant life are of little concern in the West. The brutality of the civil war and the U.S. attack, though dramatic and unquestionable facts of very recent history, are rapidly passing out of memory. Note that Ponchaud, while not guilty of the outrageous deception of Barron-Paul and others like them who excise the Western role and responsibility from history, nevertheless downplays it; U.S. bombers did not merely strike rubber plantations, nor did the French simply bring “order and peace.”²⁰⁸

When we move from the mainstream of commentary that reaches a mass audience to studies by people who know and care about Cambodia, the picture changes. Ponchaud’s book, as already noted, is quite different from most of the media comment it elicited. Chandler’s article is another case in point. One of the small group of scholars concerned

with Cambodia, Michael Vickery, reviewed the course of recent Cambodian history in an effort to explain why the revolution evolved “in a manner so contrary to all predictions”:

For all wise old Indochina hands believed that after the war had been won by the revolutionary forces—and there was no doubt by 1972, at the latest, that they would win—it would be the Vietnamese who would engage in the most radical and brutal break with the past. In Cambodia it was expected that both sides, except for a few of the most notorious leaders, would be reconciled and some sort of mild, tolerant socialism would be instituted...Among the Indochina countries only Laos has come out of the war true to form, while Vietnam and Cambodia have behaved in ways nearly the opposite of what had been expected. What this means first of all, of course, is that the Vietnamese and Cambodians were misunderstood and that the facets of their culture and history which might have revealed an unexpected capacity for tolerance in the one and vindictiveness in the other were missed.²⁰⁹

He examines what was missed; notably in Cambodia, “in spite of its heady atmosphere as the last exotic Asian paradise, it was rent by political, economic, and class conflicts.” The war that seemed to explode in 1970 “proceeded naturally from trends in the country’s political history over the preceding twenty-five years, a period characterized by intense efforts of the traditional elite to frustrate any moves toward political, economic or social modernization which would threaten its position.”

Vickery suggests a degree of caution in assessing the postwar situation: “A blackout on information has been imposed by the new government, what the refugees, the only first-hand source of news, say is contradictory, and contributions from other sources, principally the Cambodian community in Paris, alternate between the trivial and the absurd.”²¹⁰

Vickery gives a detailed account of how Sihanouk and his right wing supporters proceeded to “rule alone,” with ample resort to repression. Lon Nol, later premier after the March, 1970 coup, “established himself solidly as a power figure” in Battambang Province bordering Thailand, assuming command of the region with the rank of colonel after the withdrawal of French military forces in 1952: “During the next two years this area was the scene of operations by government forces against Issaraks²¹¹ and Viet Minh characterized by gratuitous brutality.” Recall that this is one of the areas where the worst atrocities were later recorded. Vickery continues:

As related to me by a participant, [government forces] would move into villages, kill the men and women who had not already fled and then engage in individual tests of strength which consisted of grasping infants by the legs and pulling them apart. These events had probably not been forgotten by the men of that area who survived to become the Khmer Rouge troops occupying Battambang in 1975 and whose reported actions have stirred up so much comment abroad

—where, we may add, they are attributed to “Marxism,” a much more convenient origin for the purposes of Western ideology, however dubious in the case of Cambodian peasants who had lived through such experiences in their “gentle land.”

The “conservative ideology” of Sihanouk’s Sangkum party, which effectively ruled after 1955, was clear at once, Vickery continues. In accordance with its “authoritarian philosophy,” “natural leaders should rule,” namely, “the rich and powerful who enjoyed such a situation in the present because of virtuous conduct in previous lives...The poor and unfortunate should accept their lot and try for an improved situation in the next life through virtuous conduct in the present.” As we have noted, a major theme of Ponchaud’s book, cited if at all with the implication that the beautiful traditional culture is being obliterated by savage monsters, is that these conceptions were being replaced by a new egalitarianism and emphasis on peasant self-reliance.

From the election of 1955, won by Sangkum by a resort to repression and deceit, power “remained solidly in the hands of the old right”; the elite wasted the country’s wealth through “conspicuous consumption,” “expensive foreign products,” “frequent trips abroad, [and] hard currency bank accounts.” Meanwhile foreigners were mesmerized by the famous Khmer smile. “Skeptics might wish to ask why the system didn’t break down...In fact, it did break down, and that is why Cambodia passed through a war and revolution.”

The Issaraks were the inheritors of the tradition of warfare of the colonial period, turning themselves into “fighters for independence against the French.” “For all but a tiny minority who had truly absorbed European intellectual values, modernization meant the type of growth exemplified by Bangkok and Saigon—lots of chrome and concrete, streets clogged by cars, a plethora of luxurious bars, and everyone dressed in western clothes.” It was this tiny minority who, together with the forgotten peasants of inner Cambodia, later brought the old era crashing to the ground with bitterness and violence. Meanwhile the United States, while remaining the chief supplier for the Cambodian army, often mistook Sihanouk for a “communist” in the grip of their “Dullesian hysteria.”

The political and economic situation worsened through the 1960s as the right consolidated its power and repression and corruption increased, and with it, discontent among the peasants and some urban intellectuals:

The discontent was accompanied by repression, the secret police were omnipresent, people mysteriously disappeared, and by 1966 Cambodia, though still smiling and pleasant for the casual visitor, was a country in which everyone lived in fear.

“The first large peasant revolt broke out in western Battambang province in the spring of 1967 and was suppressed with bloodshed which was reminiscent of the 1950s and prefigured that of 1975.” There were further revolts and disappearances and by 1969 insurgency was widespread though scattered.²¹² The coup of 1970 that overthrew Sihanouk was led by men who “had always been among the big guns of the Cambodian

right who had sabotaged democracy, opposed the Geneva Accords, organized the Sangkum, and helped maintain Sihanouk's absolute rule from 1955." In the subsequent war, they lost to a large extent "out of sheer greed and incompetence."

The outright U.S. intervention sharply intensified the conflict, particularly, with the escalation of U.S. bombardment of the countryside in 1973:

Particularly during the severe U.S. bombing which lasted throughout the first eight months of 1973, and which produced no reaction in Phnom Penh²¹³ other than relief, it must have seemed to FUNK [the guerrillas] that their urban compatriots were quite willing to see the entire countryside destroyed and plastered over with concrete as long as they could enjoy a parasitical existence as U.S. clients. It is certain that FUNK policy became much harsher after the bombing. Whereas in 1971-1972 they showed considerable efforts at conciliation and in general Cambodian villagers did not fear them, from 1973-4, with all allowance for government propaganda there are authentic accounts of brutal imposition of new policies without ideological preparation of the population.²¹⁴

Vickery points out that the Kissinger-Nixon policy during the last two years of the war was "a major mystery," for which he suggests an explanation that appears to us quite plausible. Referring to the "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine," which holds that "pluralistic and libertarian Communist regimes will breed leftist ferment in the West," he suggests that "when it became clear [to U.S. leaders] that they could not win in Cambodia, they preferred to do everything possible to insure that the post-war revolutionary government be extremely brutal, doctrinaire, and frightening to its neighbors, rather than a moderate socialism to which the Thai, for example, might look with envy." In short, though it was understood that the United States had lost the war in Cambodia (even though it was, quite clearly, still trying to win it in Vietnam²¹⁵), destruction of rural Cambodia, by imposing the harshest possible conditions on the eventual victors, would serve the two classic ends: retarding social and economic progress, and maximizing the brutality of the eventual victors. Then the aggressors would at least be able to reap a propaganda victory from the misery they had sown.²¹⁶ This explanation for the insistence on battering Cambodia to dust after the war was lost seems particularly reasonable against the background of the basic rationale for the U.S. war in Indochina, namely, the rational variant of the "domino theory" which held that social and economic successes in countries that extricated themselves from the U.S.-dominated global system might cause "the rot to spread" to other areas, with severe long-term consequences for U.S. power and privilege. Unable to retain control over Indochina, the United States could at least reduce the terrifying prospects that viable societies might emerge from the wreckage.²¹⁷

Vickery points out that "the success of this policy [in Cambodia] may perhaps be seen in the [1976] Thai elections, in which the defeat of the socialist parties has been attributed in large measure to fear of a regime like that in Cambodia."

Writing of the Nixon-Kissinger bombing policy of 1973 at the time, Laura Summers pointed out that it followed the Nixon administration's refusal "to accept Prince Sihanouk's invitation for negotiations in January and February, 1973." U.S. B-52s "pounded Cambodia for 160 consecutive days, dropping more than 240,000 short tons of bombs on rice fields, water buffalo, villages (particularly along the Mekong river) and on such troop positions as the guerrillas might maintain," a tonnage that "represents 50 per cent more than the conventional explosives dropped on Japan during World War II." In spite of the enormous destruction, "the bombing had little effect on the military capacity of the Cambodian guerrillas." She concludes, surely accurately, that "American policy and American bombing have placed a small country's physical and political survival in escrow for many years to come, not for the benefit of the people who live there nor in defense of any laudable ideal."²¹⁸

The fact that the Khmer Rouge ideology and practice became harsher in 1973 as a direct result of the intensified bombing was also noted by David Chandler in his congressional testimony.²¹⁹ The interpretation just suggested apparently seems credible to Cambodians. Summers remarks that "in 1973, Khmers loyal to the resistance believed the major purpose of Nixon's six-month bombing campaign was to destroy the emerging productive potential and the social security of the liberated zone ..." ²²⁰ We suspect that the goal of increasing the harshness of the Khmer Rouge, a predictable consequence, was also quite probably an intended one.

The study of the revolutionary movement in Cambodia from 1970-1974 by Kenneth Quinn of the National Security Council is quite revealing in this regard.²²¹ Quinn was resident in a South Vietnamese province bordering Cambodia from 1972-1974 studying refugees arriving from Cambodia. He reports that from early 1973—that is, from the time that the extraordinarily heavy bombing attack began—

the Khmer Communists drastically accelerated and intensified their program to radically alter society. Included in this effort were mass relocations of the population, purges of lenient cadres, the use of terror, and extensive remodeling of the economic system...events occurred within Cambodia which sent the first group of refugees fleeing into South Vietnam [beginning in 1973].

We have already discussed his comments on the measures undertaken by the Khmer Communists at that time. What is now relevant is the timing. Nowhere in his article does Quinn mention the bombing among the "events [that] occurred within Cambodia" from early 1973, or its possible significance for understanding the sharp modification of policy that he describes. The omission is as interesting as the timing he indicates, from his well-placed vantage point.

Stephen Heder has suggested (personal communication) that the radicalization of 1973 in response to the U.S. bombing might well have been motivated by a desire to win popular support and encourage willingness to sacrifice on the part of the poor majority of the population, who would bear the brunt of the attacks and would also stand to gain the most from these policies, as is sufficiently clear even from the hostile account by Quinn cited above.²²²

Whatever the explanation may be for the fierce bombing of 1973, the available facts lead to one clear conclusion: every bomb dropped added its contribution to the postwar record of revenge by the battered peasant society. Meanwhile the perpetrators—who remain beyond the reach of retribution—receive awards for their humanitarian contributions²²³ as they denounce the unaccountable savagery of the Khmer Rouge.

Turning to the policies of the new regime, Vickery remarks that

they may be usefully compared with the recommendations of a “Blueprint for the Future” prepared by an anonymous group of western and Thai social scientists and published in the conservative *Bangkok Post* [in February 1976]. Their suggestions, in order for Thailand to avoid a breakdown of its society and a revolution, were that people should be taken out of the cities and put back on the land, decentralization should give more power to local authorities, much more investment should go into agriculture, and the old elite should lose some of its wealth and political power. Now this is precisely what Cambodia has done, though of course on a much more massive scale than envisioned by “Blueprint,” but it illustrates that the basic policies are considered by “bourgeois” economists and political scientists to be rational and practicable for a country with problems similar to those of Cambodia.

Of course, there is also a major dissimilarity: Cambodia had been savaged by U.S. terror, and faced imminent disaster with the termination of the U.S. dole for the millions of people who had been subjected, in their turn, to the “forced-draft urbanization and modernization” that so entranced U.S. ideologists of the period.

Vickery was cautious in assessing the current situation though relatively pessimistic, and was willing to hazard few predictions. The postwar Khmer Rouge regime, he observed, “will certainly have no trouble teaching their people that Cambodian suffering was mainly due to foreign intervention”—we may add, from our different perspective, that the propaganda organs of the West have been busily at work convincing *their* people that any such charge is a “simple-minded myth” or a case of wallowing in “the politics of guilt.”²²⁴ He concludes finally:

Although one may legitimately ask whether the new egalitarian society could not have been established with less deliberate destruction of the old, there are ample reasons why the new leadership might answer in the negative.

Vickery’s analysis of the backgrounds of the war and the sources for the harshness of the new regime was as foreign to the media as was his skeptical caution with regard to the

developing situation. But it has not been uncommon in commentary by people whose concern is with the facts rather than with fanning hysteria in the West about the dangers of “socialism” or “Marxism”—we stress again the absurdity of the major theme of press propaganda: that the atrocities committed by Khmer peasants simply flow from “Marxism” or “atheism,” as dire consequences of liberation from the grip of Western benevolence.²²⁵

A rather similar perception is expressed in the prepared remarks by Charles Meyer at the April, 1978 Hearings on Cambodia in Oslo.²²⁶ Meyer, conservative and anti-Communist, is the author of scholarly studies on Cambodian history and contemporary Cambodia. His writings, based on long residence in Cambodia and intimate knowledge, have been ignored in the United States.²²⁷ Discussing the evidence presented at the Hearings, Meyer concludes that it suffices to show that “Democratic Kampuchea has been the stage of hasty executions” and that its people live under a regime that violates the International Declaration of Human Rights. But he adds some significant words of caution:

One knows that the colonial powers have often used the argument of “wildness” in order to impose their domination and their “civilizing mission.” They have today successors, who are pushed by the same ambitions. It is only the vocabulary that has changed.²²⁸

As for the “wildness” of the Cambodian leaders, he has this to say:

Today, like yesterday, whether they are monarchists, republicans or revolutionaries, the Khmers have an extreme susceptibility, which makes relations with them often difficult. Our Cambodian friends who are present here will not contradict me. Those who at present govern Cambodia have not escaped from this national characteristic. But they are not mad people nor monsters demanding blood—I have known several among them. Most of them sons of peasants, more or less formed in the French Marxist school, rebelling against a system which has remained feudal, they have the sentiment among the people of the countryside to have received a veritable illumination and found the road to the new. Perhaps I will shock many among you. But I believe that these Red Khmer leaders incarnate really a part of the peasants, who recognize themselves in them.²²⁹

These leaders, Meyer argues, “maintain the tradition of their predecessors just before them” and in their “immoderation” reflect deep-seated currents in Cambodian history and culture, though again he urges caution: “In reality the records re Cambodia are not so simple and many pieces are missing.” As in his book, he observes that “it is important to destroy the picture in the West that the Cambodians are non-violent by nature and filled with Buddhistic benevolence.” On the contrary, “behind that smile violence is slumbering and...it is dangerous to wake it up,” as happened in 1967 with the “brutal repression of a rising of peasants in the region of Battambang and the revolt of the minorities in the region of Rattanakiri.” Furthermore:

The American airforce gave the [military regime calling itself republican] its support by destroying the

Cambodian plains through heavy bombing without for this being accused of genocide. The following events should not let us forget this. [As] regards the fratricid[al] fights with ties from one side as well as from the other to Vietnam in periods, they were without mercy, [as] is usual in all civil wars.

Today, as previously, “one should be extremely careful in one’s analysis of the politics” of the victors, considering “the weight of the past, the ideology of the leaders, the menaces from outside, and, naturally, the psychological factors as well as the economical, religious and other ones”—a perception foreign to the mass media.

The summary executions of officials of the old regime “is in reality the application of the Cambodian penal code of 1877,” including the brutal means employed: “This punishment was used between 1965 and 1970 for ‘Red Khmers’ who were caught and would have been used still more systematically, if the government had won the victory.” Furthermore, “it seems to me that we should accept with reservations the balance in figures of the victims...[and]...admit that any estimation at present is impossible.” He insists that “there are no simple explanations or clear and evident ones and that peremptory affirmations should always be avoided.” He sees the war as a rising of the peasants against the cities, the symbol of corruption and repression: “One must further know that Cambodian city-dwellers were in reality Western colonials and Chinese [traders].”

Meyer is highly critical of the “radicalism and the excesses” of the revolutionaries. His concern to explain the postwar events in terms of Cambodian history and tradition is, however, in striking contrast to Western fulminations, though not uncommon among specialists on Cambodia, as is his attention to the factors that “contributed to harden the [internal] politics of the revolutionary leaders.”

We learn still more about these factors in a paper by Laura Summers cited earlier.^{[230](#)} She discusses the destructive impact of French colonialism, which violated the “corporate integrity” of the Khmer people: “its indigenous legal system, pattern of land possession and national administration were dismantled.” During the national uprising of 1885-1886, “French authorities with the aid of Vietnamese infantrymen succeeded in reducing the Khmer population of the *Protectorat du Cambodge* by 195,000 (20% of the entire Khmer population).”^{[231](#)} “The French displayed little remorse over the fate of this people whom they believed doomed to extinction,” as they brought a form of what Ponchaud calls “order and peace” to the land in fulfillment of their “colonial mission.” The impact on the countryside was particularly destructive. While most peasants owned some land, vast numbers of family holdings were insufficient for subsistence requirements by the early 1950s. Yields were among the lowest in the world “and barely met the subsistence

requirements of the rural population in 1965, 1966 and (especially) 1967.”²³² At that time, annual rates of interest for loans ranged from 100% to 200%; “the total effect of the credit structure in agrarian economy was to make the peasant worse than a tenant on his own property” while village and urban elites lived in luxury. Sihanouk’s attempts at some social reform had little impact. Particularly scandalous was the lack of medical care and the practice of charging exorbitant fees to peasants or denying them services or hospital treatment. The judiciary was no less corrupt and urban-based civil servants with no interest in peasant affairs enjoyed the amenities offered the rich by the colonial system while the mass of peasants sank deeper into poverty and suffering. “It is...not surprising that the revolution was violent for in addition to the human destruction heaped upon the community by intensive American bombing, there were profound social grievances and scores to be settled.” In an accompanying demographic analysis, Summers estimates the number of “postwar deaths from exhaustion, disease and execution in the range of two hundred thousand, an estimate which is based on an extremely difficult to determine *status quo ante bellum*.”

It is quite evident that to understand the events in the aftermath of the war it is necessary to pay attention to the historical background of the peasant revolution, which was further inflamed and deeply embittered by the U.S. attack culminating in the bombing of 1973, that Meyer hints might be considered genocidal in character. The sensational press accounts of atrocities that entirely ignore that background, while at the same time relying on highly dubious or sometimes fabricated evidence, may be useful contributions to the revival of imperial ideology; but they are of little value in conveying any understanding of the postwar situation.

We have already mentioned the peasant rebellions in Battambang in the west and the tribal provinces of the northeast in the late 1960s. The sources of these revolts in peasant discontent resulting from penury, oppression and corruption under the increasingly right wing central government have been explored by the Australian scholar Ben Kiernan.²³³ These revolts were no small affair; Sihanouk cited a figure of 10,000 deaths (a figure which he may well have exaggerated for rhetorical effect), and it is estimated that about 4,000 peasants fled their homes in June 1967 “in the wake of severe army repression of their protest against harsh local conditions,” as “aircraft bombed and strafed villages and jungle hideouts” and villages were burned to the ground and surrounded by troops, their inhabitants massacred. By the time that Sihanouk was overthrown in the March 1970 coup, there was “a sophisticated, powerful and indigenous resistance movement well

entrenched in many parts of Cambodia.” After the coup, there were peasant uprisings interpreted in the West as indicating support for Sihanouk. In an analysis of the locale and character of these protests, which were brutally suppressed by military force (including Khmer troops trained by the CIA in South Vietnam), Kiernan concludes that they reflect in part the ongoing anti-government rebellion, though loyalty to Sihanouk was no doubt a factor as well.²³⁴

In several studies, Kiernan suggested a picture of early postwar events in Cambodia that is rather different from what has been featured by the press.²³⁵ Specifically, he took issue with horror stories published in *Time* (26 April, 1976), which alleged that 500-600,000 people had died under the rule of the Khmer Rouge, “one of the most brutally murderous regimes in the world” which rules Cambodia by “a chilling form of mindless terror.” Like others, he notes that most of the atrocity stories come from areas of little Khmer Rouge strength, where orders to stop reprisals were disobeyed by soldiers wreaking vengeance, often drawn from the poorest sections of the peasantry. He discusses the fake photographs,²³⁶ and gives examples of fabrication of atrocity stories by refugees “in order to persuade the Thai border police to admit them.” He also deals with other fabrications that have appeared in the Western press. He suggests that, “untrained and vengeful, and at times leaderless, some soldiers in the northwest of Cambodia have terrorized soldiers, city dwellers, and peasants. This has been aggravated by the threat of widespread starvation, and actual starvation in some parts.” He questions the assumption that there was central direction for atrocities as well as the assumption that the stories from specific areas where, in fact, the Khmer Rouge had little control, can be freely extrapolated to the country as a whole. His conclusions are based in part on interviews with refugees in Thai camps and in Bangkok, and like Vickery in Thailand and Fraser in Vietnam, he reports quite a range of refugee judgments on the nature of the regime. He also gives an analysis of the class background and region of the refugee flow, relating these factors to the social and economic situation that had prevailed.

Kiernan’s detailed conclusions suggest why attending to these questions might be useful, at least for those whose concern is truth. Consider his analysis of the composition of Cambodian refugees in Thailand in August 1976. Note that this date is well after what Ponchaud describes as the worst period of terror, and that these refugees form a substantial part of the population sampled by Barron-Paul and Ponchaud.²³⁷ Kiernan concludes:

There were 10,200 Cambodian refugees in Thailand in August 1976. A tiny handful of these belong to that category of over half the population who, at the end of the war, had lived in Khmer Rouge areas for several years. The great majority of the refugees can be divided into three groups: former Lon Nol soldiers, former urban dwellers, and farmers from Battambang and Siemreap provinces.²³⁸

Unsurprisingly, over a third of the 3,000 refugees in the Aranyaprathet camp in Thailand are former Lon Nol soldiers, and many of the refugees are former *Khmer Serei*, commandos trained and financed by the CIA.

In Battambang, Kiernan writes, the “thin and undernourished” Khmer Rouge troops headed directly to the airport and broke up four T-28 bombers into pieces,²³⁹ “remembering the agony in the trenches, the hunger in the countryside because the paddy fields were full of bomb craters, and their terrible fear of asphyxiation bombs.”²⁴⁰ “For many months after that,” he continues, “refugees reported that Lon Nol soldiers were hunted down, particularly in northwest Cambodia—a few refugees were eyewitnesses to executions.”

Kiernan believes there is little evidence that the government planned and approved a systematic large-scale purge. The evidence indicates, he believes, that “apart from the execution of high-ranking army officers and officials, the killing reported by refugees from the northwest after April 1975 was instigated by untrained and vengeful local Khmer Rouge soldiers, despite orders to the contrary from Phnom Penh.” “Most of the brutality shown by local Khmer Rouge soldiers is attributable to lack of training and the difficulty of forging a disciplined organisation in the Cambodian countryside, especially after the bombing of 1973,” though “it is also quite probable that some Khmer Rouge local cadres harbour the...conception of the priorities for Cambodia’s survival...[with]...the emphasis on hard work, sacrifice, and asceticism which this dynamic form of Khmer nationalism entails” and which “has dismayed some Cambodians,” among them some cadres “who ensure peasant co-operation with their policies through force.” The killings were concentrated in “exceptional” areas where living conditions were harshest (he cites concurring judgments by Patrice de Beer of *Le Monde* and Ponchaud), regions where the Khmer Rouge were “organisationally and numerically weak.” He feels that “it is little wonder that several thousand *peasants* have fled from northwest Cambodia” (his emphasis), whereas “very few peasants, if any, have fled to Thailand from other parts of Cambodia, while soldiers and former city dwellers have arrived in Thailand from eastern and central Cambodia as well as from the northwest.” The reason is that “at the end of the war, farmers in the northwest were in for a very difficult period” because of the drastic shortage of food, exacerbated by the flow of refugees to the towns. In contrast, in areas that had been administered by the Khmer Rouge, canals and dams had been built enabling two crops to be brought in, and some rice had been stockpiled, a subject analyzed by Hildebrand and Porter, to whom he refers. Furthermore, these regions were unique in the inequity and exploitation of the poor: “With class divisions as stark as this, and after a brutal war, equally brutal revenge was taken by poor peasants” many of whom had joined

the Khmer Rouge (though many bandits “passed themselves off as Khmer Rouge” as well, not an unusual phenomenon in comparable situations). He quotes one Khmer refugee who said that in Battambang the rich were being “persecuted” while the poor were better off than before, and adds that “where the Khmer Rouge were better organised, ‘persecution’ of the rich was much less violent.”

This analysis covers the period of the worst terror according to Ponchaud, the period that provides much of the basis for the best-publicized accounts (Barron-Paul, Ponchaud, and reviews and references to Ponchaud).²⁴¹ Therefore the situation that Kiernan describes is crucially significant for an analysis of the response in the West to postwar events in Cambodia. We know of no comparable analysis from a later period, though this in any event would not be relevant to our major concern—the workings of the Western propaganda system.²⁴²

The Southeast Asia correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Nayan Chanda, presented his assessment of the situation at about the same time in several articles.²⁴³ In the *FEER*, he estimated that in the 18 months of postwar bloodletting, which according to refugee reports and “most observers” was largely over, “possibly thousands of people died,” including not only the top figures of the Lon Nol regime but also “large numbers of lower-strata civilian and military personnel of the former administration [who] have been executed in the Khmer Rouge’s cleansing process.”²⁴⁴ But the actual numbers are “impossible to calculate.” The estimate of “possibly thousands” presumably refers to those killed, not the victims of starvation or disease or unexploded ordnance. In his May, 1977 article, Chanda discussed the “human cost” of what the regime had so far accomplished in these terms:

One will probably never know exactly how many human lives have been cut down by political execution, starvation and disease. The tendency of refugees to exaggerate their troubles to attract sympathy, the active presence of the intelligence services in the refugee camps and the Bangkok press—the most important source of information about the massacres—and the contradictory testimony of the last foreigners present in liberated Phnom Penh make a precise evaluation impossible.²⁴⁵ But the consistency of refugee stories in Thailand and Vietnam and the testimony from socialist sources leaves no doubt: the number of deaths has been terribly high.

On the necessity for the evacuation of Phnom Penh and the question whether the executions were a result of deliberate policy or local initiative, Chanda comments that opinions vary and takes no explicit stand himself (*Le Monde diplomatique*), though he suggests a point of view not unlike Kiernan’s. Chanda quotes a diplomat who spent four years in Cambodia until the Khmer Rouge victory and who attributes the massacres in part to the bitterness of the war and in part to “the action of the have-nots against the haves.” Chanda adds that the 1970-1975 war “was probably the most savage in Indochina, with

soldiers of both sides giving no quarter” (*FEER*):

To the thirst for vengeance must probably be added the relative numerical weakness, political inexperience, and lack of organization of the Khmer Rouge, who suddenly became the rulers of a land ravaged by the war. In the absence of political work and a clandestine organization among the population controlled by Lon Nol, force more than persuasion was naturally used as the method of government. Suspicion, indeed profound hatred on the part of the Khmer soldiers—young peasants many of whom had lost their homes and families under the bombs—towards an urban population that was richer and more numerous also seems to have played a role (*Le Monde Diplomatique*).

Fear of sabotage was also an element.²⁴⁶ “The elimination of the former regime’s officials and the dispersal into the countryside of the educated urban middle class has created a vertical power structure,” with a “tiny group of French-educated elite...at the top dictating policy, while young and often illiterate farm boys—the grassroots cadres—are expected to implement the decisions. It is hardly surprising that these cadres rely on disciplinary action rather than persuasion or ideological motivation.”²⁴⁷

As for the postwar dead, who are listed simply as Khmer Rouge victims in the mainstream Western media, Chanda comments that disease was an extremely serious problem during the war (including a million suffering from malaria in 1972) and that the massive U.S. rice shipments which were the sole sustenance of the cities swollen with refugees did not suffice even then for more than a part of the population. He cites a source close to the U.S. government who predicted a million deaths from starvation in Cambodia in the event of a Khmer Rouge victory—approximately the number of deaths later reported by Ponchaud and many others on the basis of alleged estimates from U.S. government and other Western sources.²⁴⁸ Recall that these numbers, often inflated by imaginative reporters and congressmen, are consistently attributed to the barbarism of the Khmer Rouge, who allegedly “boast” about these deaths.

Chanda quotes one observer who says: “If you consider the sheer magnitude of the problem faced by the Khmer Rouge in April 1975 and the dire prediction from Washington that 1 million Cambodians could die of starvation, this is no mean achievement.”²⁴⁹ He also describes the economic and development programs undertaken by the new regime and the beginnings of trade and foreign contacts,²⁵⁰ the obsessive self-reliance and the conversion of the country into a labor army. His own view is evidently along the lines indicated by an observer whom he quotes: “They might have read a lot of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, but the ideology of the present leadership is virulent Khmer nationalism” (*FEER*).

In commenting on the contradictory testimony of the last foreigners to leave Phnom Penh, Chanda cited a letter by W. J. Sampson,²⁵¹ an economist and statistician in Phnom

Penh who is the author of a number of technical reports on the Cambodian economy and who worked in close contact with the government's central statistics office until March 1975, and was thus well-placed to comment on events of the period. Both the contents and the subsequent history of this communication are interesting. Sampson cites a UN estimate that the population of Cambodia in mid-1974 was 7.89 million, which agrees with his independent estimate.²⁵² He further believes that the figures offered of war casualties are much inflated, estimating civilian killings at "perhaps in tens of thousands." Turning to the postwar situation, Sampson finds the figure of 2.2 million dead mentioned in the press "questionable."²⁵³ After leaving Cambodia, he writes, he visited refugee camps and kept in touch with Khmers. "A European friend who cycled around Phnom Penh for many days after its fall saw and heard of no other executions" beyond the shooting of some prominent politicians and "the lynching of hated bomber pilots in Phnom Penh." As far as he could determine, refugees offered no first-hand evidence of elimination of collaborators. He believes that "such executions could be numbered in the hundreds or thousands rather than in hundreds of thousands," though in addition there was "a big death toll from sickness" and there were food shortages.

This communication, from what seems a credible source, appeared just at the time that the Barron-Paul book and Lacouture's review of Ponchaud were causing a great sensation in the media about the murder of 1-2 million Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge. The letter was specifically brought to the attention of journalists who cited Lacouture's statement that the Khmer Rouge had "boasted" of having killed a quarter of the population: 2 million people.²⁵⁴ With one exception they were unwilling to cite it.²⁵⁵ Porter mentioned Sampson's letter in congressional testimony when challenged by Rep. Solarz on his skepticism about the *Famiglia Cristiana* "interview."²⁵⁶ Solarz dismissed this by saying: "So, for all you know, this fellow could be a psychotic, right?" No such question was raised about unknown priests or reporters who circulated faked photographs and interviews from such sources as *Famiglia Cristiana*, or who drew conclusions from interviews with prisoners in Thai police cages.

Solarz's question and Porter's correct response ("theoretically, yes") were cited by William Shawcross in a context that is even more remarkable than his willingness to cite this disreputable insinuation.²⁵⁷ Shawcross argues that both sides of the "propaganda battle" have failed to examine their evidence carefully. The two sides are Barron-Paul, condemning the new Cambodian regime, and Hildebrand-Porter, defending it (the latter book, he writes, is "in some ways...a mirror image" of Barron-Paul). In this context, he

alleges that “Hildebrand and Porter’s use of evidence can be seriously questioned.” As his sole evidence to substantiate this charge he offers the fact that Porter cited the Sampson letter, with its estimate of casualties, as “documentation” in the Congressional hearings when asked why he was skeptical about charges leveled at postwar Cambodia. But, Shawcross continues, “Porter had to agree with Congressman Solarz that Sampson could in theory be ‘a psychotic.’” Shawcross then reports that he spoke to Sampson by telephone to inquire into his views. He quotes Sampson as having “said that altogether ‘deaths over and above the normal death rate would not be more than half a million.’” Shawcross interprets this as an estimate of victims of the Khmer Rouge, concluding: “Mr. Sampson thus seems an unconvinced and unconvincing witness on behalf of Khmer Rouge moderation. Neither side of the propaganda battle has carefully examined all of the sources that it wishes to exploit.”

Note carefully the reasoning. First, whatever Porter might have said in the May 1977 Hearings, it can hardly be offered in support of the charge that “Hildebrand and Porter’s use of evidence can be seriously questioned” in their 1976 book (worse still, as the sole support for this charge). Sampson’s letter was published subsequent to the book and obviously not mentioned in it. Secondly, Sampson’s letter is, most definitely, “documentation,” however one chooses to evaluate it. Furthermore, Shawcross does not question that Porter quoted it quite accurately and appropriately. As for Porter’s being compelled to agree that Sampson could in theory be a psychotic, Shawcross’s willingness to cite Solarz’s absurd question is remarkable; Porter would—or should—have responded in the same way if asked whether Ponchaud, or Shawcross, or the authors of this book, etc., might be psychotics: “Theoretically, yes.” Furthermore, consider Shawcross’s inquiry concerning Sampson’s views. He argues that since Sampson has allegedly changed his mind in a telephone call subsequent to Porter’s correct citation of his views, that shows that Hildebrand and Porter’s book (which makes no mention of Sampson) is unscholarly and that their “use of evidence can be seriously questioned.” The logic is mindboggling.

But putting logic to the side, did Sampson in fact change his views, thus showing himself to be an “unconvinced and unconvincing witness?” The answer to the question depends on how we interpret the telephone statement by Sampson that Shawcross quotes. Given Sampson’s known views on the general tendency to inflate figures, it might be supposed that his figure of deaths altogether above the normal is a reference to the total number of deaths throughout the war and the postwar period. In fact, in response to a query, Sampson stated quite explicitly in a letter dated March 6, 1978 that this was exactly his intent.²⁵⁸ This letter was immediately transmitted to Porter, Shawcross and the editor

of the *New York Review*. Aware of these facts, Porter in response to Shawcross wrote correctly that Sampson had intended to refer to all deaths—wartime and afterwards—when citing the half-million figure.²⁵⁹ Equally aware of the facts, Shawcross responded by repeating his claim that Sampson had offered the figure for deaths “since the end of the war.” This is, surely, a rather curious “use of evidence.”

There is much more evidence from sources that seem to deserve a hearing but have been ignored by the media. We have noted the selectivity in choice of refugee reports. We will mention two additional examples of eyewitness reports that were available to the media, in addition to those already cited, but that they chose to disregard. Liberation News Service (New York) carried a dispatch from George Hildebrand (one of the co-authors of the Hildebrand-Porter study) reporting an interview with “one of the few people in the U.S. today who can speak from direct experience,” namely, a Cambodian refugee named Khoun Sakhon who “spent the better part of a year traveling through Cambodia’s populous central provinces and working in a number of rural areas in the developing western region of Cambodia,” after having lived both in Phnom Penh and in liberated zones in earlier years. He also witnessed the evacuation of Phnom Penh in April, 1975.²⁶⁰ Sakhon “saw no massacres or abandonment of sick and elderly people” during the evacuation of Phnom Penh and claims that what the *Reader’s Digest* described as “looting” was in fact “the soldiers’ opening luxury shops and rice stores to the people.”²⁶¹ He states further that during the evacuation, “trucks distributed rice and medicine to the people and the people were free to join the cooperatives they passed or to move on.” He lived in a commune, with, he claims, an 8-hour work schedule, adequate food and medical services, and generally fair treatment. His account of the “revolutionary culture” and the conditions of life and work is generally favorable, and he expresses regret that he joined a group of urban young men who escaped, saying: “I don’t know what I’m doing here. I feel I belong back there.” A press concerned to determine the facts about postwar Cambodia might have chosen to explore this lead.

Another example that would appear to merit attention is a lengthy and detailed account of the evacuation of Phnom Penh by Chou Meng and Shane Tarr.²⁶² The forced evacuation of Phnom Penh has served as proof of the near-genocidal intent and practice of the Khmer Rouge ever since it was graphically reported by journalists at the time.²⁶³ It is featured in the books by Barron-Paul and Ponchaud and by many others. According to these accounts, based on refugee reports and what journalists observed largely from their confinement in the French embassy in Phnom Penh, the evacuation was a hideous atrocity. Hildebrand

and Porter cite eyewitness accounts by Westerners that paint a different picture, but their book has been ignored, along with the published sources they cite. The account by the Tarrs, which is the only published account by participants that provides substantial detail, to our knowledge, tends to corroborate the sources cited by Hildebrand-Porter. Shane Tarr is from New Zealand; his wife, Chou Meng, is Cambodian. Both joined the mass evacuation to the countryside on April 18, returned to Phnom Penh on April 21, and then travelled through the countryside with the convoy of journalists and others on their way to Thailand. They write that they attempted to contact the media on their return to New Zealand to present their story, “but generally speaking news editors were not interested in hearing what we had to say unless we denounced communism in general and ‘painted a picture’ of Khmer Rouge atrocities in particular.” Several articles of theirs nevertheless appeared, but apart from the left wing press, all were “heavily censored so as to make our articles unintelligible and contradictory,” they allege.

The Tarrs claim that people were told that they would have to leave Phnom Penh because there was insufficient food. “Refugees we talked to were happy at the prospect of returning to their homes” though “city-dwellers were far less enthusiastic,” at least those who had some food (the very poor were “quick to leave ...”). The initial orders were polite; subsequently they “became more like demands than requests,” though they saw no sign of force. After comparing notes with other evacuees, they conclude “that force was used only on isolated occasions.” They report that prior to liberation, they had visited the hospitals and found that only one (Calmette) was functioning properly, and that “the revolutionary forces continued to operate it after they took over” though most of the medical personnel had fled.²⁶⁴ They believe that patients were evacuated to “more hygienic surroundings,” a belief that cannot be dismissed out of hand in the light of the eyewitness account by Swain and others. They continue with a virtually hour-by-hour account of their trip to the countryside with the evacuees, then back to Phnom Penh where they joined other foreigners at the French embassy. They report many friendly contacts with villagers, refugees, cadres, and soldiers and say that they “witnessed no executions or other atrocities, and saw no attempts to intimidate people with weapons.”

On their return to the French embassy on April 21, the Tarrs report, they were questioned for several hours by journalists who had been there since the 17th of April. “But when it became clear that we had no sensational stories to tell of mass executions, rape, pillage and suicides many of these journalists became quite disappointed.” Specifically, they contend that Sydney Schanberg of the *New York Times* (who later won the Pulitzer Prize for his report of these days) dismissed their positive

account with sarcasm; it did not enter his subsequent reports, including a long story (9 May 1975) on foreigners at the French embassy. With a few exceptions, the Tarrs report, “for most of the time we spent in the French embassy we were the object of abuse and fear by those who had nothing but contempt for the Kampuchean people.”

Although Schanberg does not mention the Tarrs or their experiences during their participation in the evacuation, Swain does refer to them. He writes that Shane Tarr is so contemptible that “we—who have abandoned our Cambodian friends—do not wish to pass the time of day” with him. “He is full of nauseating revolutionary rhetoric” and he and his wife “fraternise with the Khmer Rouge guards over the walls.” Shane Tarr “has a low opinion of us members of the capitalist press, we of his hypocrisy. He is shunned.” Swain also apparently has a low opinion of the experiences of the Tarrs during the evacuation; these are never mentioned. We will see in a moment how “scholarship” deals with the account by the Tarrs.

The Tarrs then describe their evacuation to Thailand. They describe the tremendous destruction in the countryside and conversations with villagers. They claim to have seen no signs of coercion, but rather people working “according to their capabilities and the needs of the group.”

We quote their conclusions:

From our observations and understanding of the events of Kampuchea from 17th April, when we evacuated Phnom Penh, to our arrival in Poipet on 3rd of May, we can make the following points:

1. We saw no organised executions, massacres, or the results of such like. We saw about fifteen bodies in Phnom Penh, of soldiers killed in the fighting.
2. There was very little intimidation of Phnom Penh’s population by the revolutionary army. Many saw it not as an occupier but as a liberator.
3. We can refute the claims of the imperialist media that the liberation army indulged in a mass orgy of looting and destruction.
4. The march to the countryside was slow and well organised. People who had no relatives to stay with were put up by other villagers in the liberated areas, until they were assigned elsewhere. They were provided with food.
5. The aged and the ill were not expected to join in the march. We saw very few who were old or sick on the road; those that we met elsewhere told us that the revolutionary organisation catered for their needs.

We saw the destruction of five years of war and of intense U.S. bombing. But we also saw dams, irrigation canals, rice paddies, and people who, while having to struggle very hard, were proud to have liberated Kampuchea from imperialism and were now the masters of their destiny.

Again, we may ask why the eyewitness report of Chou Meng and Shane Tarr does not enter the record, as shaped by the selective hand of the media and mainstream scholarship?

The question deserves a closer look. The account by the Tarrs of their evacuation in the

convoy from the French embassy to Thailand is not unique; many reporters were present and wrote extensively about this trip. But their account of their participation in the earlier evacuation from Phnom Penh is indeed unusual. As we have seen, journalists simply ignored it, though at the time this was virtually the only direct evidence concerning what was happening beyond the view from the embassy. There is also apparently a conflict of opinion—represented by the Tarrs on the one hand and Swain and Schanberg on the other—about the situation inside the embassy where foreigners and some Cambodians were confined. The Tarrs are, incidentally, not alone in their view. Richard Boyle of Pacific News Service is a correspondent with considerable experience in Vietnam, and author of an important but unread book.²⁶⁵ On reaching Thailand he filed a report from Bangkok published in the New York *Guardian* that did not appear in the mainstream press in the United States, to our knowledge. Boyle reports that he was asked by AP to take over their bureau and file for them as well as PNS after the U.S. departure:

I reported what the Cambodian staff reported to me: that the “Khmer Rouge” troops told Phnom Penh government soldiers that they were “brothers” and that they did not want to kill them. There were eyewitness accounts by Cambodian AP staffers of “Khmer Rouge” and Phnom Penh troops embracing on the battlefield, yet when I filed this it was censored by AP. After that the story was killed. AP reported that the liberators burned down refugee huts two days before the fall of Phnom Penh, yet the Cambodian AP staffers who visited the front all day could not confirm the report.²⁶⁶

Boyle states that “stories of a bloodbath, as reported by other news agencies, cannot be verified and there is every indication that the accounts are lies.” He cites as an example an AP report “that French women were raped and brutalized,” though he asserts that French doctors and nurses “never saw any rape victims.”²⁶⁷ He also says that French mercenaries and Americans with CIA and DIA connections were permitted to take refuge in the embassy and to leave in safety, though they were regarded by the Khmer Rouge as war criminals. One of them, Douglas Sapper, a former Green Beret, “publicly boasted he was planning to take a Swedish submachine gun...and raise the American flag at the U.S. embassy killing as many ‘commies as I can.’” Yet he “was one of the first Americans to seek refuge in the embassy” and was permitted to leave, along with other journalists rumored to be working with intelligence, though the Khmer Rouge knew of these threats (Schanberg refers fondly to Sapper as one of those who “performed constructive roles” in the embassy; Barron and Paul cite him simply as an “American businessman”). Boyle questions the atrocity reports and gives a positive account of the occupation and evacuation, adding that the French prevented fraternization with Khmer Rouge troops who wanted to visit journalists. His account of the situation in Phnom Penh and within the embassy is similar to that of the Tarrs.

Returning to the theory of the Free Press, we see that there are conflicting reports of all these events. Swain and Schanberg present their view in the London *Sunday Times* and *New York Times*; the Tarrs and Boyle give their conflicting account in *News from Kampuchea* (international circulation 500) and the left wing *New York Guardian*, also with a tiny reading public. The detailed participant account by the Tarrs of the actual evacuation from Phnom Penh as they perceived it, which is quite unique, is not so much as mentioned in the mass media; their reports appeared without distortion, they claim, only in tiny left wing journals in New Zealand. Boyle reports that AP refused to publish his stories when he had taken over their bureau, choosing instead accounts of atrocities that neither he, nor French doctors or nurses, nor Cambodian AP staffers could verify. But there is no censorship in the Free Press, such as we find in totalitarian states.

We are aware of only one reference to the report by the Tarrs in the mainstream media in the West. It is worth reviewing as an indication of how academic scholarship deals with evidence that departs from the prevailing line. The well-known Cambodia specialist Michael Leifer reviewed Barron-Paul in the *Times Literary Supplement*.²⁶⁸ In a letter commenting on this review,²⁶⁹ Torben Retbøll noted that Leifer “seems to accept, somewhat uncritically, the charges put forward in the book” despite serious questions about its accuracy and selective treatment of available data—questions that are quite pertinent, as we shall see. Specifically, Retbøll cited eyewitness reports that question the Barron-Paul account of the evacuation of Phnom Phenh, including that of the Tarrs. Leifer responded rather haughtily that by “eyewitness” Retbøll “presumably...means foreigners who sheltered in the compound of the French embassy. He does not confirm whether any of these so-called eyewitnesses had actual experience of participation” in the evacuation.²⁷⁰ Evidently, Leifer was unaware of the fact that the account by the Tarrs—published six months earlier—made quite explicit that they were direct participants in the evacuation prior to being sheltered in the embassy on their return to Phnom Penh. Retbøll then reported the Tarrs’ account correctly, quoting the conclusions just given, in a letter which furthermore gave the citation to their report in *News from Kampuchea*.²⁷¹ In response, Leifer asks whether Retbøll “is aware of the fact that Tarr and his wife were among those confined to the compound of the French embassy in Phnom Penh”—which of course he was, though the relevant point is that prior to this they participated in the evacuation. Leifer then cites Swain’s account of how the Tarrs were evacuated from the embassy concluding that “on the basis of this experience, it would seem impossible for the Tarrs to have compiled a report at first hand.” He says that “at one stage, there was every prospect that Mrs Tarr would be separated from her husband because of her nationality

and dispatched out of the capital on foot,” but “the weeping couple” were smuggled on board a convoy by a French diplomat (citing Swain).²⁷² Nowhere does Leifer mention the fact that the Tarrs participated in the evacuation on foot before they returned to Phnom Penh and the French embassy from which they were evacuated, and had published a detailed report of this experience. Leifer’s first letter indicates that he was simply unaware of their account. His second letter cannot be explained on this basis; rather, it reveals that he was simply unwilling to look into it, preferring to insinuate that their detailed story must have been invented out of whole cloth, evidently in complete ignorance of what they had reported. At this point he knew exactly where their account appeared. A striking example of careful and dispassionate scholarship. Retbøll’s response correcting the factual record was not published.

In citing Swain’s contemptuous account of the Tarrs and the alleged circumstances of their evacuation, Leifer simply presents it as fact, never mentioning that their own account differs radically. Typically, an insulting account of the Tarrs reaches a mass audience, while their own version of events in which they were involved—including their participation in the evacuation and their relations to journalists—is not permitted to enter the public record. In this case scholarship surpasses journalism in deceit. The journalists simply did not refer to the Tarrs’ experiences, while condemning them for their “nauseating revolutionary rhetoric” and contemptible efforts to fraternize with the Khmer Rouge. The Cambodia scholar goes a step further, pretending that their account does not exist even when he knows precisely where it is to be found.²⁷³

To complete the story, we turn finally to the major sources of information that have reached the general public, the books by Barron-Paul and Ponchaud.

As already noted, the Barron-Paul book and their earlier *Reader’s Digest* article have reached tens of millions of readers in the United States and abroad and are undoubtedly the major source of information for the general public. They have also been widely and generally quite favorably reviewed and have been the subject of extensive comment apart from reviews, also to a mass audience, ranging from a front-page horror story in the *Wall Street Journal* to an article in *TV Guide*²⁷⁴ (circulation more than 19 million) by Ernest Lefever, a foreign policy specialist who is otherwise known for his argument before congress that we should be more tolerant of the “mistakes” of the Chilean junta “in attempting to clear away the devastation of the Allende period” and his discovery of the “remarkable freedom of expression” enjoyed by critics of the military regime.²⁷⁵ The book has been described as “impeccably-documented”²⁷⁶; the authors “deserve substantial

credit, however, for the exhaustiveness and meticulousness of their research.”²⁷⁷ The London *Economist* wrote that “the methods and documentation” of the authors “will convince any save the most dedicated sceptics that at least 1m people have died since the fall of Cambodia as a direct result of the excesses of the *Angka Loeu*”; “It may be the best book there ever will be” on this subject.²⁷⁸ In the United States, the press response in editorials and commentary was also substantial and largely unquestioning.²⁷⁹

Not all reviewers have been completely uncritical.²⁸⁰ Martin Woollacott noted that the estimates of dead are “guesswork” and that their sample of refugees “is disproportionately drawn from the middle-class and the north-west of the country.”²⁸¹ William Shawcross commented that their figure of dead “is that of the Carter Administration.”²⁸² Elizabeth Becker objects that they “pepper their book with facile polemics,” turning it “into a Cold War propaganda piece.”²⁸³ A number of reviewers have remarked on their infantile discussion of Khieu Samphan’s alleged impotence and its significance as well as their failure to refer to the U.S. role; when they speak of “the murder of a gentle land,” they are not referring to B-52 attacks on villages or the systematic bombing and murderous ground sweeps by U.S. troops or forces organized and supplied by the United States, in a land that had been largely removed from the Indochina conflict prior to the U.S. attack. But in general, their conclusions have been taken as overwhelmingly persuasive, if not definitive.

To evaluate the Barron-Paul account in a serious way, one must first consider its credibility where verifiable. Their case is largely built, as it must be, on refugee accounts. How much faith we place in their rendition of these accounts and the conclusions they draw from the samples they present will be determined by their credibility where what they say is subject to check. We stress again the importance of avoiding a gross but common error of reasoning: since the refugee accounts far outweigh in significance the supporting documentation, one might erroneously conclude that even if the latter collapses the main charges remain intact. The error is transparent; it is only the independently verifiable material that gives some indication of the trustworthiness of their account of what they claim to have heard and found.

We have already seen several examples of their exhaustive, meticulous, and impeccable scholarship, including their reliance on the *Famiglia Cristiana* “interview” and their uncritical handling of the edict allegedly put forth by a Khmer Rouge commander; they are not, of course, to be faulted for the fact that their source, Ponchaud, has since modified and then silently withdrawn this “quote,” though for the reasons we reviewed, there was ample reason for skepticism about this and other sources that they cite—quite selectively,

as we shall see, as fits their purposes. We have also mentioned their method of finding “promising” subjects under the “guidance” of Thai ministry officials and “elected” camp commanders, a critical admission as to methodology that should have at once alerted reviewers and commentators that this study is hardly to be taken too seriously.

In fact, this reliance—whether naive or cynical—on the guidance of Thai authorities is typical of their research. In his preface, Barron reviews the “diverse sources” that “all” assured him that “the communist conquerors of Cambodia had...put virtually everybody to work tilling the soil under deathly conditions.” These “diverse sources” are, *in toto*: specialists at the State and Defense Departments, the National Security Council, and three unnamed foreign embassies in Washington.²⁸⁴ The Acknowledgements supplement these remarkably diverse sources as follows: a representative of the Thai Ministry of the Interior, whose “knowledge and advice additionally provided us with invaluable guidance”; Cambodian specialists in the U.S. Department of State, the National Security Council, and the U.S. Army General Staff, who “made available large quantities of their own data, guided us to other sources, answered innumerable questions and favored us with authoritative criticism”; and Ponchaud, who “put at our disposal his immense store of knowledge about Cambodia, generously shared with us the results of his own research, saved us from errors through scholarly criticism²⁸⁵ and on several occasions assisted Ursula Naccache as an interpreter in the conduct of important interviews.”²⁸⁶ Can one imagine a researcher limiting himself to comparable sources on the other side of the fence for a critical study of U.S. imperial violence, then to be lauded for his meticulous and exhaustive scholarship? The same concept of “diverse sources” also sets the limits of their “impeccable documentation,” to which we return.

No less remarkable than their search for “promising” interviewees and their concept of “diverse sources” is the short shrift they give to pre-1975 Cambodia. They explain that they “have referred to [events prior to April 17, 1975] only to the extent we thought such references were necessary to an understanding of what has transpired since then,”²⁸⁷ reasonable enough until we see what they omit as unnecessary to such understanding. The U.S. role, for example—surely known to them if they read the journalistic sources they cite and hardly a great secret to readers of the daily press—is off the agenda as irrelevant to subsequent events.²⁸⁸ Also unnecessary to the understanding of postwar Cambodia in their view are such minor matters as the backgrounds of the revolutionary movement in peasant society and social conflict. That a study of postwar Cambodia resting on such a historical vacuum can be regarded as an outstanding work of scholarship or even a useful

study of current Cambodia is remarkable indeed. The framework that they set reveals with crystal clarity that their story, where unverifiable, is to be taken about as seriously as an account of the U.S. war in Vietnam produced by the World Peace Council. Correspondingly, it is treated as seriously by the Free Press as WPC studies are on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

There is, of course, method in the Barron-Paul research methodology; it is not as stupid as it looks at first glance. If Cambodian history, internal social conflict, the nature of peasant society, French colonialism, and U.S. intervention are all excluded by fiat as unnecessary for the understanding of what has transpired since April 1975, then the stage is fully set to blame everything on the evil Communist leaders: revenge killings, disease, starvation, overwork, unexploded ordnance, the B-52 craters that have “churned up...the entire countryside” (Swain), everything. Given their framework, we hardly need inquire into the details to predict the conclusions that these scholars will reach. All deaths in Cambodia in the postwar period, all penury and suffering and strife, will necessarily be attributed to the sole factor that is not eliminated from consideration *a priori*: the Khmer Rouge leadership. And of course that is exactly what the authors conclude. The absurdity of this procedure apparently has not been perceived by the many commentators who take this transparent propaganda exercise seriously.

The methodology for estimating postwar deaths, which has so impressed the editors of the London *Economist* and other ideologists, is hardly more than a joke; one does not have to be a “dedicated sceptic” to question their basis for concluding that “at least 1m people have died since the fall of Cambodia *as a direct result of the excesses of the Angka Loeu*” (our emphasis); mere rationality suffices, since all other factors were eliminated as irrelevant. What of the numbers? These are determined on the basis of such notable sources as Khieu Samphan’s alleged admission that “roughly a million Cambodians died,”^{[289](#)} and beyond that, estimates offered with no stated basis by various named and unnamed “Western observers,” various guesses based on no cited evidence about the proportion of “educated people” massacred, other guesses about deaths from starvation and disease, and so on.^{[290](#)}

By such routes Barron and Paul concoct their estimate that “at the very minimum, more than 1,200,000 men, women, and children died in Cambodia between April 17, 1975, and January 1, 1977, *as a consequence of the actions of Angka Loeu*.”^{[291](#)} The breakdown of numbers includes “100,000 or more in massacres and by execution” and most of the rest—roughly a million—from disease and starvation.^{[292](#)}

The “dedicated sceptic” might, at this point, raise eyebrows over the fact that 1.2 million is the figure allegedly produced by the U.S. embassy in Bangkok, since repeated widely in the press.²⁹³ And the figure of a million deaths from disease and starvation happens to correspond to the prediction by U.S. government sources of the numbers who would starve to death after the Khmer Rouge victory, as we have seen²⁹⁴—an estimate based on an assessment of the ravages of the war, specifically, the destruction of the economy by the United States.

Very little in the Barron-Paul book is subject to possible verification. Therefore an assessment of the credibility of their primary evidence (refugee reports) rests very largely on the accuracy of their brief historical remarks. Several reviewers have commented on the striking inadequacies of these remarks, failing to draw the obvious conclusion, however: if what can be checked turns out to be false or misleading, what are we to conclude about claims that are subject to no verification? Turning to their version of history, we find the standard clichés about this “once happy country” now devastated by Khmer Rouge atrocities, the “faithful, kindly believers in Theravada Buddhism” who produced annual rice surpluses in the plentiful land “without overly exerting themselves,” the “Phnom Penh residents, who had been known for their spontaneity and gaiety, their uninhibited curiosity and friendliness,” etc.²⁹⁵; compare the accounts of peasant life, the exploitative existence of the Phnom Penh elite, and the history of violence in Cambodia mentioned earlier, which pass here without notice. Barron and Paul, unlike every serious commentator, make no effort to find out what lies behind the “Khmer smile,” and they do not seem intrigued by the fact that the very reporters they cite speak of the surprise of urban residents when dark-skinned country boys in traditional garb looking like creatures from another planet entered Phnom Penh in April, 1975.

Turning to the Khmer Rouge, Barron and Paul claim that “there is no evidence that the communists ever enjoyed the voluntary support of more than a small minority of Cambodians, in either the countryside or the cities” (a standard propaganda cliché of the Vietnam War applied to the NLF, although known to be false by official experts).²⁹⁶ Rather, the Khmer Rouge programs “alienated the peasantry affected” so that families “fled to the cities” in a “mass migration”—not from the U.S. bombing but rather from Khmer Rouge cruelty. Their “mute and phlegmatic” soldiers include children “impressed into the revolutionary army at age ten or eleven when the communists had overrun their villages.”²⁹⁷ On the assumption that these remarks accurately characterize the Khmer Rouge relation to the peasantry, the “difficult question” of how they now maintain control

becomes an imponderable mystery, not to speak of their rise from a tiny movement to a substantial army under the most horrendous conditions and their success in defeating the Lon Nol army backed by massive U.S. force. But no such problems trouble these thinkers. The Khmer Rouge succeeded by skillful propaganda, exploiting the U.S. “limited incursion” and the B-52 raids directed against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries.²⁹⁸ The Khmer Rouge, they explain,

had new opportunities. To escape the spreading fighting, people started swarming from the countryside into the cities, spawning economic and social problems for the Lon Nol government. The American intervention and B-52 raids (the latter continued until August 1973) enabled the communists somewhat more convincingly to depict the North Vietnamese as “our teachers,”²⁹⁹ the United States as the “imperialist aggressor” and the Lon Nol government as “a lackey of the imperialists.” The *Far Eastern Economic Review* observed: “From being widely regarded as the dogmatic disciples of a Marxist ideology alien to Khmer national traditions and culture, the Khmer Rouge became patriots.”³⁰⁰

After their “conjecture” that the awful fate visited upon postwar Cambodia results from the “chronic impotence” of Khieu Samphan, Barron and Paul add the following explanation of the success of the Khmer Rouge despite their terrorizing the countryside:

But what is in doubt is not so important as what is certain. Khieu Samphan and a few kindred people, who neither by achievements nor by ideas had ever attracted any substantial following, absconded into the jungles, assumed leadership of an insignificant, ineffectual little guerrilla force, captured control of a political coalition and through it absolute control of an entire society.³⁰¹

Sheer magic.³⁰²

The “impeccable documentation” in this major work omits the many published sources that explain how the Khmer Rouge were recruited by the U.S. bombardment of the civilian society, a factor that the authors would have us believe is as irrelevant to an understanding of postwar Cambodian history as the actual situation in the countryside or the history of internal conflict.³⁰³

Apart from their historical comments, there is a possibility of independent verification of Barron-Paul’s evidence only in the case of the occupation of Phnom Penh, when many reporters were present at first in the city itself and later confined in the French embassy. We will therefore consider perhaps the most striking claim that they put forth from this period.

Barron and Paul claim that there was a major bloodbath. In Phnom Penh, they assert, some people saw “summary executions” and

virtually everybody saw the consequences of them in the form of corpses of men, women and children rapidly bloating and rotting in the hot sun. The bodies, sometimes grotesquely contorted in agony, yielded a nauseating, pervasive stench, and they had a transfiguring effect on the hundreds of thousands of people being exiled...[turning them into]...a silent, cowed herd...³⁰⁴

Evidently, something so dramatic would be hard to miss, so one would indeed expect

“virtually everybody” to have seen it.³⁰⁵

Their supporting documentation falls into the two familiar categories: (1) a list of names of Cambodians; (2) verifiable documentation, namely: “*Sunday Times* (London), May 8, 1975; *Mirror* (London), May 9, 1975, AP dispatch from Bangkok, May 8, 1975.”³⁰⁶ Turning to the verifiable documentation, consider first the *Sunday Times*, May 8. There is no such document. Presumably, they are referring to Jon Swain’s report in the *Sunday Times*, May 11. Assuming so, we turn to Swain’s account. There is no doubt of his fury over the “enormity and horror” of what he describes in gory detail, but he seems to have missed the consequences of summary executions described so eloquently by Barron and Paul as he was walking through Phnom Penh or observing from the embassy. He does not report having seen any signs of summary executions. He does transmit stories he heard about killings by soldiers, but that is all.

One of these stories is cited by Barron-Paul, with a little embellishment, as an example of a “summary execution.” Swain presents it as follows:

A newly-arrived French teacher says that at 8:30 this morning he was on his way to the embassy when a Khmer Rouge patrol ran out of an alley and cut a line of refugees in half, splitting a family. When the parents protested the leader raised his rifle and shot them in the chest.

This second-hand report, if correct,³⁰⁷ would serve as a second-hand example of a “summary execution” under a broad interpretation of this concept, but provides no support for the far more dramatic claim that virtually everybody saw the consequences that Barron and Paul so vividly describe. Furthermore, this example does not support the major thrust of their argument, that the “summary executions,” here and elsewhere, were commanded from on high as part of a systematic policy of genocide, perhaps a consequence of Khieu Samphan’s “chronic impotence.” Rather, it appears to be a case of a murderous act by soldiers of a conquering army, horrifying no doubt, but unfortunately all too common—for example, the “robbery and murder” committed by U.S. troops occupying Japan or their participation in mass murder of members of the anti-Japanese resistance in the Philippines, to take a case where the armed forces in question and the society from which they were recruited had not suffered anything remotely like the savagery that the Khmer Rouge had endured.³⁰⁸

Actually, Swain does discuss the matter of bloodbaths, though Barron and Paul do not refer to these remarks. Commenting on the assurance by U.S. diplomats “that the revenge would be dreadful when the Khmer Rouge came,” he writes:

I can only say that what I have heard and seen provides no proof of a bloodbath (and I would question the reliability of reports of mass executions that almost from the start have circulated outside Cambodia)...What

has taken place, though equally horrific, is something different in kind. My overriding impression—reinforced as we journeyed through the countryside en route to the Thai border—was that the Khmer Rouge military authorities had ordered this mass evacuation not to *punish* the people but to *revolutionise* their ways and thoughts. Many thousands will no doubt die. But whatever else, this does not constitute a deliberate campaign of terror, rather it points to poor organisation, lack of vision and the brutalisation of a people by a long and savage war.

In this connection, Swain has something to say about a bloodbath that escaped the attention of Barron and Paul completely:

The United States has much to answer for here, not only in terms of human lives and massive material destruction; the rigidity and nastiness of the un-Cambodian like fellows in black who run this country now,³⁰⁹ or what is left of it, are as much a product of this wholesale American bombing which has hardened and honed their minds as they are a product of Marx and Mao...The war damage here, as everywhere else we saw, is total. Not a bridge is standing, hardly a house. I am told most villagers have spent the war years living semi-permanently underground in earth bunkers to escape the bombing. Little wonder that this peasant army is proud of its achievements...The entire countryside has been churned up by American B-52 bomb craters, whole towns and villages razed. So far I have not seen one intact pagoda.³¹⁰

His final thoughts are also perhaps worth quoting:

In the last five years, Cambodia has lost upwards of half a million people, 10 per cent of its population, in a war fueled and waged on its soil by outside powers for their own selfish reasons. The people who run, live in and try to reconstruct the heap of ruins they have inherited in Cambodia today deserve the world's compassion and understanding. It is their country and it was their sacrifices. They have earned themselves the right to organise their society their own way.

In brief, Barron and Paul are careful not to cite Swain for what he does actually say, though it is highly relevant to their alleged concerns.³¹¹ Furthermore, this source lends no support to their claim that “virtually everybody” saw the hideous consequences of summary executions, or that the “summary executions” were a matter of government policy.

Perhaps we will do better with Barron and Paul's second source: “*Mirror* (London), May 9, 1975, AP dispatch from Bangkok, May 8, 1975.” The *Daily Mirror*, May 9, contains no AP dispatch (this journal contains little international news). There is, however, a report by an unidentified *Mirror* reporter, nestled amidst such items as “My secret agony, by girl's mum,” and “Men's Lib at the Altar.” This story is based on reports by evacuees from the French embassy and refugees. The reporter does not seem to have been in Cambodia, so he could not have witnessed the scene described by Barron-Paul. Nor did the people he interviewed. But he does have this to say: “The refugees heard reports of wholesale executions of Cambodians. But they never saw any themselves.”

So much for the second bit of impeccable documentation.

Perhaps Barron and Paul, in the somewhat misleading citation quoted above, had in mind an AP dispatch from another source. There is, in fact, an AP dispatch from Bangkok

(May 8, 1975) filed by Jean-Jacques Cazaux and Claude Juvenal on their arrival after evacuation from Cambodia.³¹² They say nothing about executions in Phnom Penh and report that “not a single corpse was seen along our evacuation route, however.”³¹³

Perhaps there are other May 8 Bangkok AP reports relevant to the Barron-Paul claim quoted above,³¹⁴ but the sources they cite plainly are not. Rather, these sources either say nothing about a bloodbath that should have been hard to miss on their account, or express skepticism about bloodbath reports. There is no shred of evidence from this documentation in support of their claim about what “virtually everybody saw” or even in support of their general claim that the government was responsible for “summary executions.” We are left with the unverifiable documentation: alleged interviews with Cambodians.

Other sources that Barron-Paul cite in a related context also do not bear out their claims about the signs of a bloodbath that virtually everybody saw. They cite Cazaux (AFP, Hong Kong, May 8, 1975) under the related heading “Transformation of Phnom Penh into a wasteland.” We have been unable to locate this report and doubt that it exists, but there is an AFP report filed by Cazaux on May 8 from Bangkok, where he actually was. Here he says that there were rumors that 200 heads were lying in the marketplace and thousands of bodies rotting along Highway 5 leading north, “but latecomers to the embassy said that nothing of the kind [i.e., massacres] had taken place.”³¹⁵ Similarly, Sydney Schanberg, whom they cite under “Evacuation of Phnom Penh,” notes “unconfirmed reports of executions of senior military and civilian officials” and the prospect that many will die on the march to the countryside; “But none of this will apparently bear any resemblance to the mass executions that had been predicted by Westerners.” He cites reports of executions, “but none were eyewitness accounts.” He saw bodies on the road from Phnom Penh but says “it was difficult to tell if they were people who had succumbed to the hardships of the march or simply civilians and soldiers killed in the last battles.”³¹⁶

Still another lengthy account (which Barron-Paul do not cite) was given by Patrice de Beer of *Le Monde*.³¹⁷ De Beer urges caution with refugee or secret service reports (“how badly mistaken they were is only too well known”). He is skeptical about the reports of executions. “One instance cited is that of Oudong, which we went through on April 30, and where we saw nothing of the sort.” He is also skeptical of monitored radio messages, “when you recall that the day after Phnom Penh fell a clandestine transmitter on the Thai border announced that a score of journalists had been killed by the Khmer Rouge, when in fact they were all alive.” He describes “an unknown world” in the countryside, peaceful

despite the devastation, turning to the task of reconstruction.

We hardly find here an “impeccably documented” account of how “virtually everybody” saw the horrendous scenes that Barron-Paul describe. In fact, their documentation reduces to category (1): unverifiable reports of alleged interviews with refugees.³¹⁸ The fact appears to be that virtually nobody whose reports can be checked, including sources that they are clearly aware of since they cite them in related contexts, saw the scenes that they describe.

The fact that their claim was undocumented was noted by Torben Retbøll in letters commenting on the reviews of the Barron-Paul book in the *Economist* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Barron and Paul have each responded.³¹⁹ Each produces the obligatory insults (“one of the world’s few remaining apologists for the Cambodian communists,” etc.), with a touch of hysteria that stands in marked contrast to Retbøll’s letters, which quietly point out errors in the book and express skepticism about its claims. We will not review their huffing-and-puffing in an effort to evade the issue, but the upshot is that the claim to which Retbøll referred, which we have just discussed, is not supported by the verifiable documentation that they cite. It is, furthermore, a fairly sensational claim, and one of the few that is subject to possible verification. Furthermore, even the second-hand story of an atrocity that they cite more or less accurately lends no support to their thesis about the “summary executions,” as we have seen.

Perhaps this is enough to indicate that Barron and Paul’s impeccable documentation and exhaustive and meticulous scholarship, which has so impressed reviewers, will not withstand scrutiny. The historical comments are worthless and their effort to document what might have been observed reduces to the testimony of refugees, that is, unverifiable testimony. They do offer what to the superficial reader may appear to be “documentation,” but we discover on analysis that it is irrelevant or contrary to their claims, where it exists. Recall that this is apparently the best that could be achieved with the ample resources of the *Reader’s Digest*. In the case of reporters of demonstrated integrity, reports of what refugees are alleged to have said must surely be taken seriously. In the present case, the very framework of analysis makes it clear that this is not a serious piece of work. At any point where their contribution can be evaluated, it is found seriously wanting if not entirely absurd. People who are willing to place their trust in what Barron and Paul report where no supporting documentation is available (i.e., essentially all the crucial cases) merely reveal that their preconceived bias overwhelms any critical judgment. Nevertheless, their work, both in the *Reader’s Digest* with its mass international

circulation and in this widely-reviewed and much-praised book, remains the major source of evidence on which the Western media and the general public have relied, a remarkable bit of evidence in support of the theory of the Free Press that we have been elaborating here.

Ponchaud's book, the second major source for Western audiences on postwar Indochina, is a more serious work and deserves more careful study and critical analysis. Before discussing it, a word about its reception and impact is in order. In fact, it is not quite accurate to say that Ponchaud's book itself has been a major source despite the numerous references to it: rather, the impact of this book has been through the medium of reviews and derivative commentary, primarily, a very influential review by Jean Lacouture, who has compiled an outstanding record as a historian and analyst of contemporary affairs in Vietnam and the Middle East, apart from other important work. The English translation of Lacouture's French review appeared shortly after the Barron-Paul *Reader's Digest* article, followed within a few months by their book and his corrections.³²⁰ The already quite extensive press commentary on Cambodia, which had been denouncing the Cambodian horror chamber and Gulag since the war's end, reached a crescendo of outrage and indignation at this time—always coupled with an agonized plea to “break the silence” that could barely be heard above the din of protest. The congressional hearings of May and July followed immediately. This escalation of the already high level of protest was caused, no doubt, by this “one-two punch”; Barron-Paul for the masses in the *Reader's Digest*, and Lacouture for the intellectual elite in the *New York Review of Books*. To appreciate how unusual all this is, compare the reaction to benign and constructive bloodbaths, as in the case of Timor.

As we have already mentioned, it is rare—indeed, unprecedented—for a French book on Indochina to receive such rapid and wide notice in the English-speaking world. Lacouture's book on postwar Vietnam was neither translated nor, to our knowledge, ever mentioned in the press, though it was an eyewitness account based on long-demonstrated expertise; in contrast his version of a report by a hitherto unknown French priest concerning a country with which Lacouture had considerably less familiarity became a major literary and political event. Similarly, earlier French studies that give much insight into the developments that have led to the present situation in Cambodia have never been translated and were only mentioned far from the mainstream.³²¹ And postwar French publications that give a more positive view of the Khmer Rouge are unnoticed and untranslated.³²²

It would be difficult to argue that Ponchaud's book has been translated and so widely discussed because of its unique excellence as a work of scholarship or interpretation. Whatever its merits, one would hardly maintain that it is in a class by itself in this regard. Nor is the reason for its uncommon fame that it records horrible atrocities; the same was surely true of the work of Pomonti-Thion and Meyer, for example, who dealt with the U.S. war. Nor can the reason be humanitarian concern, since the latter books were far more relevant than Ponchaud's (all questions of merit aside) on any moral scale, for reasons that are simple and obvious: the information that they conveyed could lead to direct action that would impede or halt ongoing atrocities, while it is difficult to see what Westerners could do to improve the lot of those who were subjected to repression or worse in Cambodia, as specialists have commonly observed.³²³ To "speak out" about Cambodian atrocities in the West, joining the chorus of protest, is easy enough—as easy as it would be for a Russian intellectual to condemn the atrocious acts of U.S. imperialism.³²⁴ It cannot be that some moral imperative affords Ponchaud's book its unique fame.

In fact, it is clear enough why this study has been singled out for special attention: its message, accurate or not, happens to conform perfectly to the needs of current Western ideology.³²⁵

These comments are no criticism of the book, of course. Rather, they relate to its remarkable reception, and thus are relevant to our primary concern: the workings of the Western propaganda system.

Ponchaud's book appeared in France in January 1977. A review by Jean Lacouture in *Nouvel Observateur* was immediately translated and appeared in the March 31 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, probably a record for speed in reviewing a French book. Lacouture's review had a considerable impact. Ponchaud himself writes that it "provoked considerable reaction in all circles concerned about Asia and the future of socialism."³²⁶ Our own interpretation of the impact would be a bit different. Most of those who reacted to Lacouture's review in the media by lauding the contribution of the book that they had never seen had shown little concern for the future of socialism; or for Asia, except in the sense that a fox is concerned with a brood of chickens.

Others have also commented on the influence of Lacouture's review, which has indeed been unprecedented. William Shawcross writes that it had "enormous impact particularly because it was written by a former supporter of the Khmer Rouge (he issued a *mea culpa*) for a paper which had consistently opposed the war. It was taken up by dozens of papers ..."³²⁷ In its review, the London *Economist* wrote that Ponchaud's book "gained

considerable notoriety because of an extraordinary review in the *New York Times* [sic] *Review of Books* written by Jean Lacouture, a French journalist.”³²⁸ Lacouture’s corrections (a “bizarre episode”)³²⁹ “added—a bit illogically—to the controversy that was already well advanced over whether the book itself was adequately researched and the refugees’ evidence viewed with sufficient scepticism.”

These comments bring out several interesting themes which, as we have seen, crop up constantly in discussion about postwar Indochina. Consider the *Economist*’s reference to the “controversy that was already well advanced” over Ponchaud’s book. There was no controversy. It was quite impossible for there to have been a controversy at the time when Lacouture’s review appeared. The book itself had just appeared; for all we know there was not a single person in the English-speaking countries who had read the book, let alone engaged in controversy over it, at that time (and precious few afterwards, when the unread book was having its “enormous impact” on the press); nor was there any controversy “well advanced” in France a few weeks after publication. Furthermore, there has been very little controversy over the book since. Reviews have been consistently favorable, our own review in the *Nation* included, as Ponchaud remarks in the author’s note to the American translation,³³⁰ though we raised several questions about it. But it is, as we have seen, a staple of media coverage of postwar Cambodia to pretend that a major intellectual battle is in progress, comparable perhaps to the debate over Stalinist crimes years ago. Such pretense provides a useful backdrop to the incessant plea that the story is “untold,” everyone remains silent, etc., a performance that would have an air of low comedy were it not for the seriousness of the subject.

Shawcross’s observation that part of the impact of the review was due to Lacouture’s former support for the Khmer Rouge and the fact that the *New York Review* had consistently opposed the war is very much to the point. But the matter deserves a closer look. In fact, much has also been made of Ponchaud’s early sympathy for the Khmer Rouge as evidence that his criticism has unusual force.³³¹ Lacouture does describe himself as someone “who supported the Khmer Rouge cause,”³³² and “advocated the cause of the Khmer Rouge in their struggle against the corrupt Lon Nol regime.”³³³ His previous writings indicate, however, that he was a supporter of Sihanouk, who was a bitter enemy of the Khmer Rouge until they joined forces against Lon Nol in 1970 and whose subsequent relations with the Khmer Rouge are not at all clear.³³⁴ In fact, it is difficult to see how a Westerner could have supported the cause of the Khmer Rouge, since virtually nothing was known about it. One should beware of the “God that failed” technique.³³⁵ It is

a common error, as we have pointed out several times, to interpret opposition to U.S. intervention and aggression as support for the programs of its victims, a useful device for state propagandists but one that often has no basis in fact. As for the *New York Review*, it is true enough that it consistently opposed the war and was at one time open to writers connected with the peace movement and the U.S. left (along with a wide range of others), but it rejoined the liberal consensus in these respects years ago. It may be that the impact of Lacouture's review derived in part from the fact that it appeared in the issue immediately following the André Gelin article on Vietnam that we discussed in chapter 4. This too was influential, and its impact was enhanced, as we have seen, by the pretense that the journal in which it appeared had been an "organ of celebration" for the Communists, a typical lie of the propaganda institutions.³³⁶

Finally, as concerns Ponchaud, it is quite true that he writes that he listened to Khmer Rouge proposals "with a sympathetic ear," since "I come of peasant stock myself."³³⁷ As far as we know, however, during the years Ponchaud lived in Cambodia he never publicly expressed this sympathy and also apparently felt that no purpose would be served by any public comment or protest over the war—specifically, the foreign attack—while it was in progress; we are aware of nothing that he wrote on the war apart from several articles and his book all after the war's end. Furthermore, he describes nothing that he did that might have been to the benefit of the peasants of Cambodia.

It apparently has not been noticed by the many commentators who have cited Ponchaud's alleged sympathy with the Khmer peasants and the revolutionary forces that if authentic, it is a remarkable self-condemnation. What are we to think of a person who is quite capable of reaching an international audience, at least with atrocity stories, and who could see with his own eyes what was happening to the Khmer peasants subjected to daily massacre as the war ground on, but kept totally silent at a time when a voice of protest might have helped to mitigate their torture? It would be more charitable to assume that Ponchaud is simply not telling the truth when he speaks of his sympathy for the Khmer peasants and for the revolution, having added these touches for the benefit of a gullible Western audience or for the benefit of apologists who can then write that the atrocity stories have "impressed even those such as François Ponchaud,...who was sympathetic to the Communists when they first took over."³³⁸

In short, neither Lacouture, nor Ponchaud, nor the *New York Review* had ever, to our knowledge, identified with the Khmer Rouge or their "cause." While it is true that the impact of Lacouture's review of Ponchaud's book in the *New York Review* derives in part

from such loose associations as those just mentioned, that is more a commentary on the media than on the facts.

Lacouture's review has indeed been extremely influential. The corrections, in significant contrast, have been little noted.³³⁹ Two samples from the national press illustrate the media response.

Basing themselves on a review of a book that they had never seen, by an unknown author, the editors of the *Christian Science Monitor* published an editorial stating that "the loss of life" had been reported to be "as high as 2 million people out of 7.8 million total." They quote Lacouture's rhetorical question: "What Oriental despots or medieval inquisitors ever boasted of having eliminated, in a single year, one quarter of their own population?"³⁴⁰ Surely enough time had passed to enable the *Monitor* editors to do what several private individuals had done upon reading Lacouture's review: namely to check his source for this remark, and find that it did not exist. The *Monitor* also cites the faked photographs discussed above (the fakery had been publicly exposed a year earlier), noting merely that they "have not been positively verified." They quote Lacouture's conclusion that "Cambodia's leaders have been 'systematically massacring, isolating and starving city and village populations whose crime was to have been born when they were,'" never troubling—here or elsewhere—to inquire into the evidence for this allegation, or to ask what curious aberration might impel Cambodia's leaders to systematically starve and massacre the population of the country, or how a small group of leaders might be able to achieve this strange purpose. They conclude that "for the outside world to countenance such barbarism and remain officially silent about it, in a sense diminishes respect for humanity and its rights everywhere." To fully appreciate their reaction one would have to review the shabby editorial record of this journal³⁴¹ in countenancing the barbarism of the United States over many years.³⁴²

Lacouture, like Ponchaud, takes note of the brutality of the U.S. war, surely a major factor in what followed. These references disappear from the *Monitor* editorial, which like Barron-Paul pretends that the current suffering in Cambodia takes place in a historical vacuum, a mere result of Communist savagery. We have already quoted their earlier editorial based on Barron-Paul, which avoids any reference to U.S. responsibility, though there is much moralizing about those who are allegedly indifferent to Khmer Rouge terrorism against the "engaging people" of Cambodia.³⁴³

To mention a second example, the liberal columnist of the *New York Times*, Anthony Lewis, devoted a column to Lacouture's review.³⁴⁴ Lewis was an outspoken and effective

critic of the U.S. war from 1969 and has since explained that “by 1969 it was clear to most of the world—and most Americans—that the intervention had been a disastrous mistake”³⁴⁵—not a crime. He commented on the “painful honesty” of Lacouture’s article which “lends ghastly conviction to its terrible conclusions.” He then quotes Lacouture’s conclusions: the new rulers “have invented something original—auto-genocide,” a new and more horrible form of genocide: “After Auschwitz and the Gulag, we might have thought this century had produced the ultimate horror, but we are now seeing the suicide of a people in the name of revolution; worse: in the name of socialism.” Apparently a greater horror than Auschwitz or the Gulag, not to speak of the Indonesian massacre of 1965-1966 or the U.S. massacres in Indochina (but then, as Lewis has explained, these were only a “disastrous mistake”). Lewis also quotes approvingly Lacouture’s claim that the “group of modern intellectuals, formed by Western thought, primarily Marxist thought” are systematically massacring and starving the population, and his further claim that these monsters “boast” of having “eliminated” some 2 million people, along with other citations that happen to be inaccurate. As distinct from the *Monitor*, Lewis cites Lacouture’s reference to the U.S. role, and like his colleagues warns that “to remain silent in the face of barbarism as enormous as Cambodia’s would be to compromise our own humanity”—as if there had been silence, as if it is “our own humanity” that is at stake, as if we do not compromise our own humanity by describing “American decisions on Indochina” as “blundering efforts to do good” (see note 345) after having remained silent about them apart from timid queries during the period of the worst barbarism. “In today’s world,” he concludes, “we ignore mass murder anywhere at our own peril.”

The allegations that Lewis quotes are severe indeed. As a legal scholar, he might have troubled to inquire into the source of the allegations that he is reporting from a book he had never seen by an author of whom he knows nothing, before broadcasting them in such a manner to a mass audience. Had he done so, he would have quickly discovered that his specific citations had no basis in the text of the book, as we shall see. And for all his expressed concern about compromising our own humanity, it is only “our own peril” that concerns this moralist (who concedes “that there is not much hope of affecting the Cambodian government”), not the consequences for Third World peoples who are potential victims of the hysteria that he is helping to inflame with his unexamined charges based on misquotations and errors.

The *Monitor* was unwilling to print corrections of the false statements in its editorial or the conclusions based on them, despite evidence provided to them that established the falsity beyond question. They did, however, publish (prominently) a letter correcting some

of these errors³⁴⁶; retraction would have been the honorable step. After Lacouture's corrections had appeared, Lewis (who had also had in hand for several weeks the documentary evidence showing that his quotes were baseless) noted them at the end of a column.³⁴⁷ His corrections were only partial, and he did not make clear that full corrections eliminate entirely the evidentiary basis for the conclusions he proclaimed. Nor did he indicate whether this fact bears on the "ghastly conviction" lent to Lacouture's "terrible conclusions."³⁴⁸

Since the media have relied heavily on the contents of Lacouture's review, regardless of the corrections,³⁴⁹ it is important to see exactly what kind of information they are offering to the reading public. We are not concerned here with Lacouture's interpretation of what he read, but rather with the evidence that was available to the many journalists who made use of this evidence without troubling to investigate its character and accuracy. Such evidence, plainly, consists of Lacouture's more or less explicit references to the book. These references turn out to be false or highly misleading in every instance. Hence the journalists were writing on the basis of no serious evidence whatsoever. Furthermore, subsequent inquiry has revealed that some of the material in the book that was the basis for Lacouture's distorted account was quite dubious at best—again, a pattern that we have noticed earlier; evidence about Cambodia has a way of crumbling when one begins to look at it closely, a fact that should raise some questions about the examples that have not been investigated because of their lesser prominence in the international campaign. What reached the public was a series of reports by journalists of Lacouture's misreading of statements by Ponchaud that are themselves questionable in some instances (even forgetting the additional link in the chain of transmission, namely, the refugee reports). It is therefore of some interest to review these cases one by one.

The review contains the following references that can be related to something that appears in the book itself:

(1) "What Oriental despot or medieval inquisitors ever boasted of having eliminated, in a single year, one quarter of their own population?"

(2) Ponchaud "quotes from texts distributed in Phnom Penh itself inciting local officials to 'cut down,' to 'gash,' to 'suppress' the 'corrupt' elites and 'carriers of germs'—and not only the guilty but '*their offspring until the last one.*' The strategy of Herod." [Lacouture's emphasis]

(3) Ponchaud "cites telling articles from the government newspaper, the *Prachachat*,...which denounced the 're-education' methods of the Vietnamese as 'too slow.' 'The Khmer method has no need of numerous personnel. We've overturned the basket, and with it all the fruit it contained. From now on we *will choose only the fruit that suit us perfectly.* The Vietnamese have removed only the rotten fruit, and this causes them to lose time.' [Lacouture's emphasis.]

"Perhaps Beria would not have dared to say this openly; Himmler might have done so. It is in such company that one must place this 'revolution' as it imposes a return to the land, the land of the pre-Angkor period, by

methods worthy of Nazi Gauleiters.”

(4) “When men who talk of Marxism are able to say, as one quoted by Ponchaud does, that only 1.5 or 2 million young Cambodians, out of 6 million, will be enough to rebuild a pure society, one can no longer speak of barbarism [but only] madness.”

These quotes exhaust the alleged evidence available to the journalists on whom this review had such a powerful impact, and provide the basis for their further commentary.

Let us now review the status of this evidence. We have already discussed case (4), noting that the source, if any, is so unreliable that Ponchaud deleted the reference from the American edition. Case (1) is simply false, as Lacouture points out in his corrections.³⁵⁰ There was no Khmer Rouge boast reported, and no figure of one quarter of the population “eliminated” or even an allegation of that number of postwar deaths.

Turning to case (2), as Lacouture acknowledges in his corrections, the source is not texts distributed in Phnom Penh but something much more vague; this is true not only of the single case he discussed in the “Corrections,” namely, the injunction to suppress “their offspring until the last one,” but also of the others cited.³⁵¹ The one case that Lacouture discusses in his corrections is presented, as he says, as a “leitmotif de justification” in the French text. The other examples we are unable to locate in Ponchaud’s French text, though similar quotes are offered as “slogans used, both on the radio and at meetings.” What their status may be is not made clear. The radio reports are not identified (others are elsewhere in the book), so they are perhaps refugee memories. Plainly this must be true of the slogans reported. Thus what we have is memories transmitted at second-hand by Ponchaud, modified by Lacouture, and presented as texts distributed in Phnom Penh.

What of the one example that Lacouture corrects, which expresses “the strategy of Herod”? Does this judgment still hold if it is a “leitmotif” without explicit source rather than an official text? Without pursuing that question, we note that the American translation of Ponchaud’s book softens the reference still further. There is no quote given at all; rather, the text reads: “the theme that the family line must be annihilated down to the last survivor is recurrent in such reports.” The relevant “reports” are identified only as “several accounts”—presumably, refugee memories. Ponchaud’s paraphrase of a theme that several refugees have allegedly reported does not seem to us to provide very powerful support for denunciation of a regime as employing “the strategy of Herod.”³⁵²

We are left with one single bit of evidence, namely case (3). This case turns out to be rather interesting. In his “Corrections,” Lacouture acknowledges that *Prachachat* is not a Cambodian “government newspaper” but rather a Thai newspaper—a considerable difference, which suffices to undermine the comment that he appends to this quote. In the

corrections he writes that this Thai paper, in its issue of June 10, 1976, “carried an interview with a Khmer Rouge official who said, as Ponchaud writes, that he found the revolutionary method of the Vietnamese ‘very slow,’ requiring ‘a lot of time to separate the good people from the counter-revolutionaries.’” It was the Thai reporter, he adds, who drew the conclusion he quoted that the Khmers had “overturned the basket ...”³⁵³

This is a fair rendition of what Ponchaud reports.³⁵⁴ Ponchaud writes: “In an interview in the Thai newspaper *Prachachat* of 10 June 1976 a Khmer Rouge official said that the Vietnamese revolutionary method was ‘very slow,’ and that ‘it took a great deal of time to sort out the good from the counter-revolutionaries.’”³⁵⁵ Ponchaud then cites the conclusion of the reporter of *Prachachat*, and adds this final comment as a separate paragraph, closing the chapter: “This is the ‘Great Leap Forward’ of the Khmer revolution.”

The American version is a bit different. The final ironic comment is deleted entirely. Furthermore, he says here that the interview with the Khmer Rouge official was “cited” in *Prachachat*; that is, there is still another link in the chain of transmission. Note that this interview and the Thai reporter’s comment are considered rather significant; the chapter heading is: “The Overturned Basket.”

When we first read Ponchaud’s original, we assumed that the Thai journal *Prachachat* must be a right wing journal giving a criticism of the Khmer Rouge. That is what Ponchaud’s account suggests, in particular his final ironic comment, now deleted in the American edition. We wrote in the *Nation* (25 June 1977) that the chain of transmission was too long to be taken very seriously and we raised the following question: “How seriously would we regard a critical account of the United States in a book by a hostile European leftist based on a report in *Pravda* of a statement allegedly made by an unnamed American official?” (Correspondingly, how seriously should we regard a critical account of Cambodia in a book by Ponchaud based on a report in *Prachachat* of a statement allegedly made by an unnamed Khmer Rouge official?) The answer is: not very seriously. Whatever one thinks of this, it is evident that the basis for the extreme criticisms that Lacouture appends to this “quote” disappears when it is properly attributed: to a Thai reporter, not a Cambodian government newspaper.

Several people (Heder, Ponchaud, Vickery) have pointed out to us that we were mistaken in assuming that *Prachachat* was a right wing newspaper critical of the Khmer Rouge. The fact is that it was a left wing newspaper, and the actual text³⁵⁶ is not a criticism of the Khmer Rouge, but a defense of the Khmer Rouge against foreign

criticism, something that could hardly be guessed from Ponchaud's account and is certainly worth knowing, in this context. Furthermore, it turns out that there is indeed another link in the chain of transmission; Ponchaud's revision of his French text in the American (but not British) translation is correct. *Prachachat* did not interview a Khmer Rouge official. Rather, it cites a report by a person described as "a neutral individual" in Paris who says that "a Khmer official of the new government, residing in Paris, said to me ..." Here, then, is an improved version of our original analogy: How seriously would we regard a critical account of the United States in a book by a hostile European leftist based on a report in *Encounter*³⁵⁷ of comments by a "neutral person" who reports statements of an unnamed American official? Again, not very seriously.

Note that the unnamed Khmer Rouge official in Paris is quite possibly a member of the pro-revolutionary Cambodian community in Paris, whose information is itself second or third-hand (perhaps through Peking), as Heder points out.³⁵⁸ Furthermore, given the context it is not so clear what interpretation to give to the comment about the Vietnamese methods being "very slow." Lacouture's reference as well as Ponchaud's text suggest that what is intended is that the methods are too slow in eliminating people (at least, that is how we read them). The full context of the original article in *Prachachat*, however, suggests that what is in fact meant is that the Vietnamese method is too slow in returning former collaborators (including professionals and even former military men) to normal lives to help build the new society; again, a vast difference. The gist of the article seems to be a call for rapid proletarianization of the urban bourgeoisie—who, as every rational observer agrees, had to be moved to productive work in a country that had no economy,³⁵⁹ and had no way of feeding millions of people who had been driven into the cities by U.S. "forced-draft urbanization." No one could guess from Ponchaud's citation that this may well be the intended sense of these remarks.

Furthermore, the context and the proper wording suggest a rather different sense for the paragraph quoted from the Thai journal's conclusion; recall that the article was intended as a defense of the Khmer Rouge against criticism.³⁶⁰ As Lacouture gives the quote, following Ponchaud, the Thai journalist says that "the Khmer method has no need of numerous personnel." The implication is rather similar to that conveyed by the widely quoted remark about needing only 1-2 million people to build the new society (Lacouture's case (4), already discussed): namely, not many people are needed; the others can be eliminated. Evidently, Lacouture understood it this way (we did as well)—hence his comment about Beria, Himmler and Nazi Gauleiters. But the context omitted from

Ponchaud's text makes it clear that this interpretation is entirely false. The immediately preceding paragraph and the one in question read as follows:

If we may make a comparison, we see that the Vietnamese method requires numerous personnel to supervise the population; it may even turn out that it will not succeed everywhere, and the authorities will thus be charged with a very heavy burden.³⁶¹

In contrast, the Khmer method does not need numerous personnel; there are no burdens; because they have removed all the burdens out of the city ...

Then comes the comparison of overturning the basket.

Note two crucial points. Placed in context, it is obvious that the reference to the Khmer method not needing numerous personnel means that not many people are needed as supervisors, not that most of the population can be eliminated. Whatever one may think of this, it hardly justifies the remarks about Beria, Himmler and the Nazi Gauleiters. Ponchaud's citation, eliminating the relevant context, radically changes and severely harshens the sense. Secondly, note that the phrase "they have removed all the burdens out of the city," which plainly means that the burdens of the authorities have been removed from the city, is translated by Ponchaud as follows: "there are no heavy charges to bear because everyone is simply thrown out of town."³⁶²—obviously, the connotations are quite different.

When the proper context is introduced and Ponchaud's mistranslation is corrected, we find that the journalists of *Prachachat* are indeed giving what they take to be a defense of the Khmer revolution. We will not go into the question of whether this defense is adequate. Rather, our point is that what they are saying is radically different from the impression conveyed by Ponchaud—which explains why Lacouture, and we too, were so seriously misled as to the character of the *Prachachat* article. Thus this final item in the list of Lacouture's references (number (3)), goes the way of the others. It provides no basis whatsoever for his charges, but rather shows that Ponchaud has once again flagrantly misrepresented a quotation, the very one from which he took the chapter heading.

Two conclusions emerge from this discussion. First, journalists who have been relying on Lacouture's review (with or without corrections) have built their case on sand. Furthermore, inquiry reveals that when we proceed beyond his published correction to a full list of corrections, and beyond that to correction of Ponchaud's original text to which he referred, the sand turns to jelly.

The original French has been considerably modified in the American edition. Specifically, in the list just given, item (4) is dropped entirely; the central example of (2) is changed from a quote to a paraphrase; the final ironic comment based on the translation of

Prachachat is deleted and it is correctly stated that the article did not contain an interview with a Khmer Rouge official but rather that such an interview was cited. Item (1) was simply an error based on a misreading of a false statement by Ponchaud. Item (2) was also a misreading of Ponchaud. As for item (3), not only was Lacouture's reference to Ponchaud seriously in error, but Ponchaud's original translation from *Prachachat* is in part extremely misleading and in part flat wrong.

All in all, not a very impressive performance, either at the source or in the review.³⁶³ But it is this material that has had such a major impact on Western journalists, perhaps second only to the Barron-Paul book that we have already discussed.

Returning now to Lacouture's point that it is a matter of secondary importance to decide "which person uttered an inhuman phrase, and whether the regime has murdered thousands or hundreds of thousands of wretched people," we believe that this review of the facts strengthens our earlier argument that it does matter indeed. It appears that the "inhuman phrases" in question may not have been uttered at all, or when uttered, were hardly so inhuman as Lacouture and Ponchaud suggest. It remains an open question whether the "regime has murdered" those who died from disease, starvation or overwork—or whether we have murdered them, by our past acts. It is also unclear on Ponchaud's evidence whether "the regime" has murdered the victims of "summary executions" (by government design? or peasant revenge? or soldiers out of control?).

We have now reviewed the two major sources of information for U.S. and indeed Western readers: Barron-Paul and Lacouture's rendition of Ponchaud. We turn next to Ponchaud's book itself. Again, we face the usual problem of logic: the trust we place in unverifiable material, which includes the essential and the most serious charges, depends on the trustworthiness of material that can be verified, here or elsewhere. In this case, we are restricted to the book itself, as the few articles we know of add little. As we have seen, Ponchaud plays fast and loose with numbers and is highly unreliable with quotations. This discovery naturally raises questions about sources that cannot be checked. As in the case of Barron-Paul, we can turn to his account of the history and background to assess the credibility of his reporting and conclusions. There is a vast difference between the two books in this regard. Ponchaud at least makes an effort to deal with these crucial matters. He offers virtually no documentation, which again reduces the possibility of assessment, but much that he recounts seems plausible both on grounds of inner consistency and what is known from other sources. We have mentioned a few cases where we find his historical account unsatisfying; namely, in reference to the colonial impact and the U.S. role, though

these are at least mentioned. On his account of Khmer culture and the ideology of the post-revolutionary society, briefly mentioned above, we are not qualified to comment.

In his historical comments, Ponchaud tends to keep closely to the version of events offered by the U.S. propaganda system. Consider, for example, his discussion of the U.S. and Vietnamese involvement in Cambodia. Since he gives no sources, we do not know on what information he relies; plainly, not direct experience in these cases. The major studies³⁶⁴ give a general picture of the following sort: Cambodia had been subjected to attempts at subversion and direct aggression by its U.S.-backed neighbors, Thailand and South Vietnam, from the 1950s. Diem's troops had attacked border regions in 1957. A CIA-backed plot to dismember Cambodia in 1958-1960 was foiled. There were provocations from the Thai side of the border, but the Vietnamese frontier posed a much more serious threat. "From 1957, but particularly from 1964, American-South Vietnamese forces attacked posts and villages, bombed rice fields, machine-gunned trucks, napalmed or defoliated the Cambodian side of the frontier," causing hundreds of casualties each year (Pomonti-Thion). Meyer reports that "at the end of 1963, the 'Khmers Serei,' equipped and trained by the CIA, made more frequent incursions into Cambodian territory from bases in South Vietnam and Thailand," and a few years later "the American-South Vietnamese attacks, ever more murderous, multiplied against the frontier villages of Cambodia." After the massive and destructive U.S. military operations in nearby areas of South Vietnam, particularly in January-February 1967, Vietnamese peasants and guerrillas took refuge in narrow border areas, leading to cynical charges from Washington about Communist encroachment into neutral Cambodia. According to Meyer, by March, 1970, when the coup that overthrew Sihanouk took place, they were scattered along border areas to a maximum depth of perhaps 25 kilometers in the extreme northeast provinces which were to a considerable extent under the control of indigenous guerrillas. Other sources concur. Relations between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese in the "sanctuaries" were generally friendly at that time, and there were few military conflicts. The first evidence of Vietnamese encampments on the Cambodian side of the border was discovered in late 1967, a few kilometers beyond an unmarked border. While hypocrites in Washington and the press fumed in public about "North Vietnamese aggression," the internal view was different. From the *Pentagon Papers* we learn that as late as May 1967—i.e., well after the major U.S. military operations cited above—high officials believed that Cambodia was "becoming more and more important as a supply base—now of food and medicines, perhaps ammunition later" (John McNaughton). A year earlier a U.S. study team discovered the results of a U.S. helicopter attack on a Cambodian village (first denied,

later conceded when eyewitnesses including a CBS television team reported the facts), one of several such cases discovered accidentally. In March 1969 the massive “secret bombing” began.

It is intriguing to consider the reactions in the United States to the occasional revelations that Cambodia had been attacked by U.S. forces. Roger Hilsman, who was director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department and later Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in the Kennedy administration, describes an attack by U.S. bombers on a Cambodian village on January 21, 1962, with an unknown number of civilian casualties. He describes this as a “tragic error in map-reading”: the real intent was “to bomb and strafe the cluster of huts near the Cambodian border” where it had been reported that there were Viet Cong guerrillas. It would not have been a “tragic error” if a Vietnamese village had been bombed by U.S. planes in January, 1962, with an unknown number of civilian casualties. Hilsman’s sole criticism concerning this bombing attack against a defenseless village (apart from the tragic error in map reading, which led to the wrong peasants being killed) is that though “the plan was well and efficiently executed” it was not well-designed for guerrilla warfare: “The greatest problem is that bombing huts and villages will kill civilians and push the population still further toward active support for the Viet Cong.”³⁶⁵ Hilsman is widely regarded as a “dove.”

On 25 March 1964, the *New York Times* published a report by Max Frankel, now an editor, with the interesting title: “Stomping on U.S. Toes: Cambodia Typical of Many Small Nations Putting Strain on a Policy of Patience.” What aroused Frankel’s ire was that Cambodia had “borrowed a leaf from Fidel Castro’s book and demanded tractors and bulldozers as compensation for the killing of Cambodians by South Vietnamese in a frontier attack.” He is referring to the Cambodian response to a Vietnamese ground and air attack on a Cambodian village in which they were accompanied by U.S. advisers. A U.S. Army pilot “was dragged from the wreckage” of an L-19 observer plane “shot down in the action,” and “diplomats who rushed to the scene confirmed Cambodian reports that at least one troop-carrying helicopter had landed at Chantrea with three Americans on board.” The Cambodian village of Chantrea was bombed and attacked by 12 armored cars, according to Cambodian sources; seventeen persons were reported killed and 13 injured.³⁶⁶ It was not the attack, but Cambodia’s response that enraged Frankel, who explains as follows:

It is open season again for the weaker nations to stomp on the toes of big ones...Leading the pack in big-power baiting these days is one of the smallest of nations, the Southeast Asian kingdom of Cambodia...What

Cambodia is up to seems to turn on what Cambodia's young leader, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, is up to. Washington has always regarded the 41-year-old Premier-Prince as a clever, headstrong, erratic leader who wishes to serve his people, defend their independence and develop their resources. It has also found him lacking some of the talent and temperament for the job...For the most part, the Administration's instinct has been to try to save a wayward young nation's independence in spite of itself and, at times, despite its own leaders. Officials remark privately that Indonesia is more important than Sukarno, Ghana more important than Nkrumah, Cambodia more important than Sihanouk.

But now Washington is "not only alarmed and saddened, but confused." Of course, "Cambodia's current effort to force the United States into a major conference that would embarrass its Thai and Vietnamese friends will be resisted"; the reference is to a conference that would settle border questions and guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and integrity in a period when the United States was desperately seeking to undermine international efforts to neutralize South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia so as to avert the major war towards which the United States was clearly driving.³⁶⁷ But what was most irritating was the Cambodian effort to "stomp on U.S. toes" by asking for reparations after a village was attacked by forces trained, supplied and advised by the United States, and accompanied by U.S. military advisers and aircraft. It was this unmitigated gall that was trying the patience of the U.S. government while calling forth a reaction in the *New York Times* that is remarkable as much for the paternalism and racism of its style, so typical of the annals of colonialism, as for the response to the actual events discussed.

In his rather sketchy historical review, Ponchaud passes over all of these events of the 1950's and 1960's in silence. His only comment is that the "Vietnamese revolutionaries were becoming a real menace to Cambodia,"³⁶⁸ hardly an adequate summary. He says that "in his desire to stop the infiltration along Cambodia's borders, [Sihanouk] disclosed the location of Vietcong bases, which were then bombed by the American air force. He called it a scandal and a crime over Radio Phnom Penh, but nobody was deceived"³⁶⁹; the reference is to the 1969 bombings. Actually, Ponchaud is deceived. Keeping strictly to the position of U.S. propaganda, he fails to indicate that Sihanouk vigorously and publicly denounced the bombing of *Khmer peasants*.³⁷⁰ Turning to the March 1970 coup, Ponchaud has little to say about the background. His few comments are, furthermore, inconsistent: the coup was "presumably backed by the Americans" and "the United States was not sure what attitude to adopt in the Cambodian crisis. Sihanouk's downfall was bad news ..." ³⁷¹ The first of these two contradictory claims seems to us the more likely correct, given what little evidence is available, but Ponchaud does not pursue the issue—a rather important one. He makes no mention of US-ARVN military intervention from two days after the coup of March 18. As for the "incursion" of April 30, he says only that the South Vietnamese took advantage of it to avenge the murder of Vietnamese by the Lon

Nol government: “their savagery drove a number of Cambodian peasants over to the Khmer Rouge.”³⁷² Not a word about the savagery of the U.S. attack, which was amply reported at the time. Ponchaud asserts that the North Vietnamese “[swept] up young Khmers to be trained in revolutionary warfare,”³⁷³ ignoring entirely the eyewitness reports by U.S. correspondents in captivity that the U.S. bombing was recruiting Khmers, both young and old, to the Khmer Rouge. Pomonti-Thion remarks appropriately that “the mechanism by which American bombs create resistance is too well known for us to describe here.”

With regard to the war in Vietnam, Ponchaud also keeps closely to the U.S. government propaganda line in his scattered remarks. Discussing the “North Vietnamese” withdrawal from Cambodia by 1971, he says that they “returned to their conquest of South Vietnam”³⁷⁴—the sole reference to that struggle, astonishing in its misrepresentation of the background that is so well-documented and familiar that we need not elaborate here. Referring to Sihanouk’s attitude towards the struggle in Vietnam, he says that at the time of the Tet Offensive, “when he saw how fiercely the population in the south defended itself he wavered, and began to think the north might be defeated.”³⁷⁵ Again, an amazing distortion of well-known facts that are easily documented from U.S. government sources. There is overwhelming evidence from these sources and elsewhere that the Tet Offensive was primarily a struggle between the U.S. Army and South Vietnamese guerrillas—indeed, the fact is not seriously disputed. In the Mekong Delta, for example, where some of the fiercest battles were waged, there were no North Vietnamese regular forces, and in fact the total number of North Vietnamese who had been drawn into the war by the U.S. bombardment of North Vietnam (exactly as planners anticipated) was at approximately the level of the South Korean and Thai mercenaries at that point, vastly outnumbered (and even more vastly outgunned) by the U.S. Expeditionary Force that had for years been attempting to conquer South Vietnam and to destroy the society in which the indigenous revolt was rooted. Furthermore, during the Tet Offensive, the U.S. military continually lamented their difficulties in encouraging ARVN to reenter the countryside, particularly in the Delta. To describe the Tet Offensive in Ponchaud’s terms is a gross falsification and a remarkable capitulation to the U.S. propaganda machine.

Such examples as these do not increase one’s faith in the veracity of material that is not subject to independent confirmation, to say the least, and should alert any serious reviewer. We have seen no mention of any of this in a single review or comment.

Turning to material that is closer to the focus of Ponchaud’s book, as in the case of

Barron-Paul, the only section subject to independent verification is the one dealing with the evacuation of Phnom Penh. Here too serious questions arise. We have already noted how severely Ponchaud's account was distorted by Donald Wise in a review.³⁷⁶ Turning to his own account, there are many dubious elements. Thus Ponchaud reports the explanation given by the revolutionary government: that the evacuation was motivated in part by impending famine. He rejects this argument on the grounds that rice stocks in Phnom Penh would have sufficed for two months for a large part of the population with careful rationing.³⁷⁷ The book cites none of the evidence from Lon Nol and U.S. government sources that gives radically smaller estimates, namely 6-8 days' supply,³⁷⁸ one of the many cases where the lack of documentation in the book conceals a rather casual attitude towards crucial facts. We questioned Ponchaud's two-month estimate in our review already cited. In a letter in response, Ponchaud informed us that his estimate included food illegally stored and "may be somewhat excessive"; he also suggests that the 8-day estimate of the Lon Nol government may have been exaggerated in an effort to obtain more aid, which is possible, though their demand at the time was primarily for arms rather than "humanitarian assistance," and in any event that still leaves the estimate of USAID officials that there was only a six-day supply of rice. Even if Ponchaud's possibly "excessive" two-month estimate were correct, it remains unclear how famine could have been averted after two months had the cities not been evacuated, though the methods were extremely brutal, judging by most of the eyewitness accounts. As we have already noted, sources in or close to the U.S. government concur.³⁷⁹

On the question of whether the atrocities in Cambodia, which Ponchaud graphically records from the testimony of refugees, were the result of a centralized policy of massacre or were rather, as many close observers suspect, in significant measure the result of localized peasant revenge and the acts of undisciplined troops, Ponchaud comes down squarely on the side of systematic and centralized policy:

The liquidation of all town and former authorities was not improvised, nor was it a reprisal or expression of wanton cruelty on the part of local cadres. The scenario for every town and village in the country was the same and followed exact instructions issued by the highest authorities.³⁸⁰

And elsewhere, after reporting a refugee account of the massacre of officers and sick or invalid soldiers, he writes: "So many accounts contain similar statements that it can safely be affirmed that the revolutionaries had simply decided to kill off the bulk of the former civilian and military establishment in the hours following the capture of Phnom Penh."³⁸¹

One may, perhaps, be skeptical that Ponchaud has reviewed the scenario "for every town and village in the country" as is claimed in the cited remark. As for the "exact

instructions issued by the highest authorities,” this is presumably his reconstruction from the alleged similarity of refugee accounts—he offers no direct evidence—and is as trustworthy as these accounts, his report of them, his interpretations of what he reports, and his judgment about the similarity of accounts of which, naturally, he can offer only a sample. The cautious reader, bearing in mind the serious inaccuracies of his quotes and citations where they can be checked and his careless treatment of historical fact, may want to reserve judgment on the question at issue. Ponchaud’s own conclusions, it is by now clear, cannot be taken very seriously because he is simply too careless and untrustworthy. It is hardly in doubt that work of this calibre would be dismissed out of hand, if it were critical of the United States.

It is also worth recalling in this connection that according to published refugee testimony that Ponchaud does not cite, executions had been ordered halted by mid-1975,^{[382](#)} though we do not know how reliable this testimony is, or, if reliable, whether such orders were observed or changed. As for the similarity of refugee accounts, we have already noted reasons for skepticism. Other Cambodia watchers and scholars who have visited refugee camps and interviewed refugees have expressed different judgments, and we have cited a few examples that have been generally ignored by the media that also raise questions. Ponchaud himself naturally gives only a sample of the accounts he has assembled.^{[383](#)} Even the examples he cites do not substantiate his firm conviction that central direction rather than localized cruelty or revenge has been clearly established. To mention a few examples, he cites a Khmer pharmacist who escaped in June 1975—that is, well after “the revolutionaries had simply decided to kill off the bulk of the former civilian and military establishment in the hours following the capture of Phnom Penh”—who reports: “The attitudes of the Khmer Rouge varied enormously from one to the next, and we got the impression that their orders were not very specific.” Later he is quoted as saying: “You had to understand [the villagers]; they had suffered a lot from the government air force. Several people in every family had been killed in the bombardments.”^{[384](#)} Perhaps this observation, far from unique, accounts for some of the subsequent killing and oppression. The same pharmacist speaks of the unaccustomed hard work and lack of food, concluding: “The Khmer Rouge were decent enough but if anyone resisted them or didn’t obey at once, it meant death.”

In his *Le Monde* articles, Ponchaud was less certain about the alleged “central direction.” Here he writes of the Khmer Rouge cadres that “it is difficult to know whether they receive orders coming from the government or whether they act on their personal

initiative.”³⁸⁵ In general these articles give the same account as the book, though obviously in less detail.³⁸⁶ What did Ponchaud learn in the interim that caused him to change his mind on this crucial point?

In other connections too Ponchaud refers to diversity of policy. On the matter of “marriage customs,” the subject of much denunciation in the Western press, Ponchaud writes that “refugees’ accounts differ widely on this point, presumably because of variations in regional practice.”³⁸⁷ And on revenge as a possible factor for killings, he observes that during the Samlaut *jacquerie* of the late 1960s the police and military

were heavy-handed, killing many villagers and burning their homes. The population fled into the forest, with intensified loathing for the unjust administration that was leaving a trail of death wherever it went...when the Samlaut peasants took to the mountains [in 1968], they were firmly resolved to pay back a hundredfold the evil that had been done to them.³⁸⁸

Recall again that this was one of the areas where the worst atrocities were later reported, and where Khmer Rouge control is said to have been very limited.

Such examples as these, which can readily be supplemented from the literature, raise serious questions about Ponchaud’s certainty with regard to the central direction of the massacres. There seems ample evidence that other factors—peasant revenge, for one—were involved, and it seems to us far from clear, on the evidence that he and others put forward, that practices were as uniform as he claims. We note once again that not one single reviewer or other commentator in the mainstream press, to our knowledge, has expressed any skepticism about these conclusions, and some have elaborated them considerably, e.g., Lacouture, who informs us that the group of intellectuals who proclaim their Marxist ideology as they lead the country to ruin are systematically massacring and starving the population and that the “auto-genocide” of the new rulers shows us that we were wrong when we thought that Auschwitz and the Gulag were “the ultimate in horror.” Ponchaud’s reference to Lacouture’s review expresses no reservations on these or other conclusions, so we may perhaps assume that he regards them as justified. They go far beyond any evidence that he presents (and as noted, are in part inconsistent with this evidence) and are subject to serious question in the light of other evidence to which he does not refer.

In the author’s note to the American translation, Ponchaud writes: “I am an exegete by training and profession; I have long been accustomed to applying the methods of source criticism to a body of reported events in order to elicit the historical truth from them.”³⁸⁹ This self-characterization hardly seems appropriate to the work we have been discussing, with its carelessness with regard to quotes, numbers, and sources. We have ourselves been

led to undertake some unexpected exegesis in comparing the various texts that Ponchaud has produced: the *Le Monde* articles and the French book; the French original and the American and British translations; the *Prachachat* article and Ponchaud's severely distorted version of its contents. The discrepancies between the British and American translations deserve a further look, as we try to assess the credibility of the unverifiable material that constitutes the bulk of Ponchaud's case.

We have noted several discrepancies between the British and the American translations. In each case, the British translation remains true to the French original whereas the American translation introduces changes that are not trivial, in the light of the way in which the material deleted or modified has been exploited in the international condemnation of the Khmer Rouge. It is a little strange, to begin with, that there should be these discrepancies. None are indicated. There is a single translator: Nancy Amphoux. The author's notes for the two translations are dated on the very same day: September 20, 1977, Paris. Presumably they were written at the same time.³⁹⁰ Why then should the two translations differ? The differences are systematic: where a question was raised about the French text in the course of the effort to trace Lacouture's references, the American translation has been modified while the British translation has been left as in the original. We note, finally, that the queries were raised in the United States, and that by an international trade agreement the British translation cannot be purchased in the United States and will not be found in U.S. libraries; the British version is the world edition. Perhaps it is worthwhile to undertake a more systematic review of the discrepancies, in an effort to understand just what is going on.

To review so far, we have noted the following examples:

(1) The British translation includes (in the text, and as modified by Lacouture, on the cover) the alleged quote: "One or two million young people are enough to make the new Kampuchea" (Ponchaud's revision of his *Le Monde* citation) and the appended statement that the Khmer Rouge are "now grimly turning" this "blood-chilling boast...into a reality." All of this is eliminated from the American translation.

(2) The "quote" that is described as an official text by Lacouture, namely, that "their line must be annihilated down to the last survivor," has been softened to a "recurrent theme" of refugee reports without quotes in the American translation, but left in quotes as a "leitmotiv of justification" in the British version, as in the French.³⁹¹

(3) With reference to the Thai journal *Prachachat*, the American translation indicates

correctly that there was no interview in the paper with a Khmer Rouge official, as both the French and British versions assert, but rather that such an interview was “cited” in the journal, which gave a second-hand report. Furthermore, the American translation deletes the final ironic comment about the “Great Leap Forward,” again softening the impact, while the British version keeps it. We emphasize again that these discrepancies are insignificant in comparison to the gross distortion of the Thai original and the crucial omission of relevant context that remains in the French original and both translations, and is further distorted in Lacouture’s review, where it reached a general audience.³⁹²

(4) There is a further striking case in which the American and British translations diverge, in perhaps a still more curious way. Recall that the author’s notes for the English and American translations are dated on the same day and are translated by the same person. They are also largely identical, but not entirely. The American version begins as follows:

On March 31, 1977, *The New York Review of Books* published an account of my book under the signature of Jean Lacouture, which provoked considerable reaction in all circles concerned about Asia and the future of socialism. With the responsible attitude and precision of thought that are so characteristic of him, Noam Chomsky then embarked on a polemical exchange with Robert Silvers, Editor of the *NYR*, and with Jean Lacouture, leading to the publication by the latter of a rectification of his initial account. Mr. Chomsky was of the opinion that Jean Lacouture had substantially distorted the evidence I had offered, and, considering my book to be “serious and worth reading, as distinct from much of the commentary it has elicited” [reference to the review cited in note 100], he wrote me a personal letter on October 19, 1977 in which he drew my attention to the way it was being misused by anti-revolutionary propagandists ...

The British version, dated the same day, begins as follows:

Even before this book was translated it was sharply criticized by Mr Noam Chomsky [reference to correspondence with Silvers and the review cited in note 100] and Mr Gareth Porter [reference to *May Hearings*]. These two “experts” on Asia claim that I am mistakenly trying to convince people that Cambodia was drowned in a sea of blood after the departure of the last American diplomats. They say there have been no massacres, and they lay the blame for the tragedy of the Khmer people on the American bombings. They accuse me of being insufficiently critical in my approach to the refugees’ accounts. For them, refugees are not a valid source ...

The British version then includes the following passage:

After an investigation of this kind, it is surprising to see that “experts” who have spoken to few if any of the Khmer refugees should reject their very significant place in any study of modern Cambodia. These experts would rather base their arguments on reasoning: if something seems impossible to their personal logic, then it doesn’t exist. Their only sources for evaluation are deliberately chosen official statements. Where is that critical approach which they accuse others of not having?

None of this appears in the American version.

The contrast between these two texts, both dated September 20, 1977, is quite striking. Our favorable reference to Ponchaud’s book in the American version becomes a sharp attack in the British version. The “responsible attitude and precision of thought” that

receive such fulsome praise in the American version become complete irrationality, refusal to consider evidence, blind dogmatism, lack of any critical approach, and faked “expertise” in the simultaneous British version.

The accusations in the British version are false, and Ponchaud knows very well that they are false, as is sufficiently clear from the American version penned—it appears—on the same day. Far from saying that “there have been no massacres,” we wrote in the article to which he refers that there undoubtedly had been massacres though their scope and character were subject to debate, which we briefly reviewed, including Ponchaud’s “grisly account of what refugees have reported to him about the barbarity of their treatment at the hands of the Khmer Rouge” in a book that we described as “serious and worth reading.” We concluded that “we do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments,” all of which, incidentally, assume substantial atrocities and thousands or more killed. As for Porter, in the reference that Ponchaud cites he begins by writing: “There were undoubtedly large numbers of killings in the newly-liberated areas immediately after the war by soldiers of the victorious army ...” and “it may well be true” that there were summary executions by local officials, though “an adequate picture” will be impossible to construct for many years. Ponchaud’s statement that according to Chomsky and Porter “refugees are not a valid source” is also an outright falsehood, as he knows perfectly well. In the reference Ponchaud cites, we wrote: “While [refugee] reports must be considered seriously, care and caution are necessary”; exactly his own explicit conclusion in the book, as we have seen. Porter takes the same position: after giving examples to illustrate the care that must be taken with refugee reports, he writes, in the very reference that Ponchaud cites: “This does not mean that refugee accounts are always false or even grossly exaggerated. But in judging the credibility of assertion based on a refugee report, one should take into account ...”—then follow considerations that would be second nature to any serious journalist or scholar. Ponchaud’s final remarks merit no comment, though they give some further insight into his reliability and precision.³⁹³

This comparison, which strikes us as quite remarkable, explains why the editors of the *Economist* were misled into writing that Ponchaud “forthrightly included some of the main attacks as a footnote to the English-language preface,”³⁹⁴ referring to our review which described the book as “serious and worth reading,” and thus hardly qualifies as an “attack”—recall Ponchaud’s citation in the American edition. They were, of course, reviewing the British edition, and naively trusted the author, in this respect as in others. Further questions remain unexplained. Why the stream of falsehoods, surely known to the

author to be false, in the British edition, replaced in the simultaneous American edition by a show of courtesy and praise? We note again that the British edition is not obtainable through commercial channels in the United States and is not to be found in American libraries, while conversely, readers of the British edition are unlikely to be familiar with the references to U.S. publications that Ponchaud cites in his series of false accusations.

This kind of petty deceit is unworthy of discussion except insofar as it provides some indication of the credibility of a person who is building a case on largely unverifiable evidence. That issue is important, given the enormous impact of his work and its effect, as it has been amplified through the international propaganda system, in reconstructing attitudes and ideology in the West.

We gain some further insight into Ponchaud's scholarly practice by looking at subsequent translations of his book. The Norwegian translation contains reference to events of May, 1978, and therefore evidently went to press long after the British and American translations were completed, indeed after they had appeared.³⁹⁵ The material deleted or modified in the American translation appears in the Norwegian translation, as it did in the French original and the British translation. Evidently, it is only the reader in the United States who is to be spared the material that has been questioned in the United States, and that Ponchaud knows to be indefensible.

In a review of Ponchaud's book that is fairer than most, William Shawcross writes that "Chomsky has pointed out some inconsistencies and mistakes in Ponchaud's book" (referring, presumably, to private correspondence and our published review), "but they are of a minor nature and do not in any way affect that judgment."³⁹⁶ The judgment to which he refers is Ponchaud's comment in the author's note to the American translation, which reads: "I was compelled to conclude [in the book], against my will, that the Khmer revolution is irrefutably the bloodiest of our century. A year after the publication of my book I can unfortunately find no reason to alter my judgment."³⁹⁷ The evil demon that bedevils quotations about Cambodia has been at work once again. We are, by now, perhaps not surprised to discover that Ponchaud has misrepresented himself. The conclusion stated in the book is not, as he alleges in the author's note, that the Khmer revolution "is irrefutably the bloodiest of our century" but rather a distinctly different one: "the Khmer revolution is one of the bloodiest of the twentieth century."³⁹⁸ Actually, we concur with the judgment expressed in the book itself ("one of the bloodiest"), although we feel that the context requires *immediate* complementary mention—lacking in Ponchaud's book—of the no less bloody U.S.-sponsored counter-revolution and direct

assault that precipitated the bloody revolution. Shawcross seems to be implying that we do not concur with the judgment in the book, why, we have no idea; certainly not on the basis of anything we have written.

As for the inconsistencies and mistakes in Ponchaud's book, how seriously one takes them is, of course, a matter of judgment. While we find the conclusion in the book itself valid enough—and are indeed unaware of any contrary view—we want to point out the fallacy of reasoning that leads Shawcross to accept Ponchaud's misrepresentation of the conclusion of his book. The fact is that Ponchaud's book is highly unreliable where an independent check is possible. It is also true that the errors are “of a minor nature” as compared with the bulk of the evidence he presents: unverifiable refugee reports. As we have further noted, even these reports, on which he relies, do not support his unqualified conclusions on the serious question of central direction and planning of atrocities,³⁹⁹ and the material that has proven unreliable plays a large role in his argument for central direction and intent. We stress again that it is the verifiable evidence, of however minor a nature it may be, that determines how much faith a rational person will place in material that is subject to no check. This point Shawcross seems to have missed.

In his author's note for the American translation, Ponchaud writes that although “we, the French and the Americans, bear part of the responsibility for the Cambodian drama,” nevertheless “we cannot make use of the deaths of millions of Khmers to defend our own theories or projects for society,” referring to unnamed “accusing foreigners.”⁴⁰⁰ Shawcross ends his review with the second of these statements and then adds: “In fact, of course, it can be and is being done.” Shawcross does not say who is “of course” making use of the deaths of millions of Khmers to defend their own theories or projects for society, nor does Ponchaud tell us who are those “accusing foreigners” to whom his injunction is directed. The lapse is not accidental.⁴⁰¹ It would be difficult indeed to find anyone *defending the Khmer Rouge* (as distinct from those who exploit and magnify Cambodian atrocities to demonstrate the evils of Communism or liberation) whom this description fits.

The logic should be carefully considered. Shawcross's statement is a plain falsehood and Ponchaud's comment on which it is based is at best seriously misleading, with a presupposition that is plainly false.⁴⁰² There are, to be sure, people who are skeptical of the implicit claim that “millions of Khmers” have died as a result of the policies of the regime—surely nothing that Ponchaud reports substantiates this estimate, which is in fact far higher even than his own assessment of casualties, as we have noted.⁴⁰³ There are other people, though they are few indeed, who have defended the Khmer revolution on the

basis of their own “theories or projects for society.” We know of few people, in fact, who have offered more positive comments than Ponchaud himself does, in his discussion of the emphasis on self-reliance, the dignity of labor, the “new mentality” with its “spirit of responsibility” and “inventiveness,” etc. But to fall under Ponchaud’s injunction or Shawcross’s obviously false claim, a person would have to *both* agree that millions have died at the hands of the regime *and* justify this fact on the grounds of his social theories. We seriously doubt that any such person exists. All of this is simply another of the desperate efforts to create an opposition, which we have observed throughout this review.

In fact, there is a different interpretation of Ponchaud’s comment and Shawcross’s elaboration which can be justified, though one at variance with their intention. There are indeed people—a great many of them—who claim that millions have died (or have been killed) in Cambodia and who are making use of this alleged fact to defend their own theories and projects for society. It is, in fact, one of our main themes that the mass media of the West have discovered Cambodia’s travail (previously ignored, understated or suppressed when the direct responsibility was incontestably Western) precisely because of its ideological serviceability. The populace of the West can be mobilized to fear the consequences of “radicalism,” attention can be diverted from the proliferating terror within the U.S. sphere, and the case can be reaffirmed that the West must be prepared to intervene to prevent such awful events as the removal of some “gentle land” from the Free World.

Returning to Ponchaud’s book, despite flaws that seem to us quite significant, we still believe, as we wrote in the earlier review cited, that it is “serious and worth reading, as distinct from much of the commentary it has elicited” and as distinct from propaganda tracts such as Barron-Paul which have aroused general enthusiasm in the West, for reasons that are all too obvious. A fair review of informed opinion about postwar Cambodia would, in our opinion, include this book as a serious though also seriously flawed and obviously unreliable contribution, in some (but not all) respects, to be placed at the more extreme critical end of the spectrum of specialist judgment and analysis. Such a review would not, however, single this book out (still less, Barron-Paul) as the repository of unchallenged truth, as the media coverage generally suggests. In fact, as we have seen, insofar as its statements cannot be independently verified, they should be regarded with a degree of skepticism, given the fate of those examples that are subject to independent verification.

It is noteworthy that not only the media but also governments appear to have relied

uncritically on Ponchaud, despite his evident unreliability. A British government report, released by the Foreign Office, stated that “many hundreds of thousands of people have perished in Cambodia directly or indirectly as a result of the policies of the Communist government,” according to the press summary.⁴⁰⁴ The Foreign Office report “cited ‘reputable observers’ for this estimate.” Only one such observer is cited in the *Post* account: “Father Francois Ponchaud, a French authority on Cambodia.” A careful look at Ponchaud’s work—specifically, his way with figures (his estimates are cited by the Foreign Office)—shows that it must be regarded with considerable caution; it is at best suggestive, hardly authoritative. If the press account of the British government report is accurate, proper caution was not taken, though an analysis of Ponchaud’s work should not have been beyond the resources of the British Foreign Office, had it been concerned with finding the truth.

To complete the review of books about postwar Cambodia, we should mention briefly a third—actually the first to appear—namely the Hildebrand-Porter study to which we have referred several times.⁴⁰⁵ This book differs from the later studies by Ponchaud and Barron-Paul in a number of respects: (1) it is virtually unread (by mid-1977, when we discussed it in the cited review, it had sold about 1,000 copies); (2) it has been almost entirely ignored by reviewers and political commentators apart from occasional abuse; (3) it is carefully documented from Western and Cambodian sources. Factors (1) and (2) are explained by a fourth striking difference: this book gives a rather favorable account of Khmer Rouge programs and a detailed picture of the impact of the U.S. war—a continuing impact, as the authors show. The fourth factor alone suffices to eliminate it from the record, whatever its merits or deficiencies. Published in 1976, the book was well received by the journal of the Asia Society.⁴⁰⁶ In *Choice*⁴⁰⁷ it is described, in a brief note, as “A rare combination of humanitarianism and scholarly research.” Apart from these notices, the book has to our knowledge been reviewed only in our 1977 *Nation* article (very briefly) and in the *New York Review* by Shawcross a year later,⁴⁰⁸ where its “use of evidence” was challenged in the manner we described. It has not been used as the basis for editorial comment, with one exception. The *Wall Street Journal* acknowledged its existence in an editorial entitled “Cambodian Good Guys,”⁴⁰⁹ which dismissed contemptuously the very idea that the Khmer Rouge could play a constructive role, as well as the notion that the United States had a major hand in the destruction, death, and turmoil of wartime and postwar Cambodia. In another editorial on the “Cambodian Horror,” the *Journal* editors speak of the attribution of postwar Cambodian difficulties to U.S. intervention as “the record extension to date of the politics of guilt.”⁴¹⁰ On the subject of

“unscrambling Chile,” however, the abuses of the “manfully rebuilding” Chilean police state are explained away as an unfortunate consequence of Allendista “wrecking” of the economy.⁴¹¹ In brief, Hildebrand and Porter attribute “wrecking” and “rebuilding” to the wrong parties in Cambodia.

In his foreword to the book, Asian scholar George Kahin of Cornell University observes that

in their documented and comprehensive account, George Hildebrand and Gareth Porter provide what is undoubtedly the best informed and clearest picture yet to emerge of the desperate economic problems brought about in Cambodia largely as a consequence of American intervention, and of the ways in which that country’s new leadership has undertaken to meet them...Anyone who is interested in understanding the situation obtaining in Phnom Penh before and after the Lon Nol government’s collapse and the character and programs of the Cambodian government that has replaced it will, I am sure, be grateful to the authors of this valuable study.

The Free Press, however, is not grateful for an account of the results of the U.S. intervention or the efforts to overcome them, and has shielded the general public from any perception of postwar Cambodia that focuses on these issues.

Since this book does not form part of the media barrage concerning what must be believed about postwar Cambodia, we will not subject it to any further analysis, given our specific concerns here.

It is difficult to convey properly the deep cynicism of the all-too-typical reporting that obscures or completely eliminates the U.S. role in turning Cambodia into a land of massacre, starvation, and disease. While journalists prate about morality, people are dying in Cambodia as a direct result of policies that many of them supported and concealed, and now eliminate from history. It is hardly in doubt that the malnutrition and disease caused by the U.S. war, not to speak of the legacy of hatred and revenge, will have lasting effects upon this “lovely land” with its “engaging people.”⁴¹²

It is difficult to conjure up in the imagination a statement from a Cambodian source that would not have served as proof of Communist iniquity as it entered the U.S. propaganda system. On the anniversary of the Khmer Rouge victory, Khieu Samphan gave a talk over Phnom Penh radio in which he said that agricultural production had improved and people now get enough to eat “to take care of their health and fatten them up.” How was this received and interpreted in the United States? An AP dispatch from Bangkok cites this comment, adding that he “made no reference to the starvation, disease and widespread executions reported by many Cambodian refugees. But he *admitted* that the country...had ‘suffered untold difficulties’ since the Communist victory.”⁴¹³ The reader is presumably to conclude that this “admission” of untold difficulties such as starvation and

disease supports the charges against the Communist regime. And just this conclusion is drawn by the *Christian Science Monitor* in the editorial on Cambodia already cited: “Reading between the lines is illuminating,” the editors inform us, repeating the wording of the AP dispatch and commenting: “All this calculated mistreatment of a people in order to make a nation self-sufficient ought not to go unnoticed ...”⁴¹⁴ Presumably, they prefer the situation in Laos where the United States withholds all but a trickle of aid in the face of overwhelming disaster,⁴¹⁵ or Vietnam where the refusal is total and even initiatives to normalize relations have been rebuffed by the United States. Recall the widespread acknowledgement that the new regime had considerable, perhaps “spectacular” success in overcoming the food crisis caused by U.S. bombing, considerably more so than the other countries of Indochina. It was hardly irrational for the Cambodian regime to suppose that the United States would leave the country to starve after destroying its agricultural system. If the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the media in general were expressing any human concern, instead of simply grasping at any straw to find a way to denounce an official enemy, they would be in the forefront of the drive to bring the U.S. government to alter radically its inhuman policy of withholding sustenance from the countries it has destroyed, instead of gloating over the suffering of our victims in one of the most hypocritical displays in modern history.

Bertrand Russell was one of the early critics of Bolshevism after a visit to Russia in 1920. But he also had this to say:

Every failure of industry, every tyrannous regulation brought about by the desperate situation, is used by the Entente as a justification of its policy. If a man is deprived of food and drink, he will grow weak, lose his reason, and finally die. This is not usually considered a good reason for inflicting death by starvation. But where nations are concerned, the weakness and struggles are regarded as morally culpable and are held to justify further punishment...Is it surprising that professions of humanitarian feeling of the part of the English people are somewhat coldly received in Soviet Russia?⁴¹⁶

Similarly, when poor peasants are driven into the jungle from villages destroyed by bombing, they may seek revenge. How much more apt are Russell’s words when applied to the United States, which bears direct responsibility for bitter suffering throughout Indochina and now refuses to aid the victims because they do not meet its finely discriminating standards of human rights. It would require at least the talents of a Jonathan Swift to do justice to this scene.

To appreciate fully the cynicism of the press and editorial comments, it is necessary to recall the role of the U.S. mass media in supporting the “secret war” against Cambodia. Prior to the Nixon-Kissinger administration, Cambodia had been subjected to U.S. or U.S.-supported armed attack and subversion, but not on a regular and systematic basis.

The massive assault against Cambodia began with the B-52 operations, initiated, according to the official record, on March 18, 1969. On March 26 the Cambodian government, recognized by the United States, issued statements condemning the bombing and strafing of “the Cambodian population living in the border regions...almost daily by U.S. aircraft,” with increasing numbers of people killed and material destroyed, alleging that these attacks were directed against “peaceful Cambodian farmers” and demanding that “these criminal attacks must immediately and definitively stop ...”⁴¹⁷ Prince Sihanouk called a press conference on March 28 in which he emphatically denied reports circulating in the United States that he “would not oppose U.S. bombings of communist targets within my frontiers.” He went on to say that Communists are not the only victims; “Unarmed and innocent people have been victims of U.S. bombs,” including “the latest bombing, the victims of which were Khmer peasants, women and children in particular.” He then issued an appeal to the press: “I appeal to you to publicize abroad this very clear stand of Cambodia—that is, I will in any case oppose all bombings on Cambodian territory under whatever pretext.”⁴¹⁸

The “secret bombings” continued, along with defoliation attacks for which no agency of the U.S. government has as yet admitted responsibility. On January 3, 1970 the Cambodian government issued an official White Paper giving specific details of U.S. and U.S.-client attacks on Cambodia up to May, 1969 by air, sea and land, with dates, places, specific numbers of casualties, photographs, etc. Occasional cases of U.S. bombing of Cambodian villages (including destruction of well-marked hospitals, bombing of ambulances attempting to retrieve wounded, etc.) became public knowledge when discovered by Americans who happened to be on the scene; the usual technique was for the government to deny these reports, then concede them if American eyewitnesses were found to be present.⁴¹⁹ Throughout this period, the press remained virtually silent. Neither Sihanouk’s appeal nor the official White Paper which documented murderous U.S. government attacks on a “friendly” country were considered worthy of comment by the press; we know of no reference to the White Paper in the mainstream U.S. press, though it was hardly a secret.⁴²⁰ The “secret bombings” continued, concealed by the U.S. press which was later to claim that it was Richard Nixon who kept the bombings secret from the press and the U.S. public, thus undermining the foundations of our democracy.⁴²¹

There was one notable exception, namely, a *New York Times* report by William Beecher which reported B-52 raids on “Vietcong and North Vietnamese supply dumps and base camps in Cambodia,” citing U.S. sources and stating falsely that “Cambodia has not made

any protest,” disregarding Sihanouk’s impassioned appeal and his protest against the murder of “Khmer peasants, women and children in particular.”⁴²² Beecher’s report also said that “in the past, American and South Vietnamese forces had occasionally fired across the border and even called in fighters or helicopter gunships to counter fire they received from enemy units there”; not mentioned is the somewhat more important fact that U.S. aircraft attacked Cambodian villages and that according to the “friendly” government of Cambodia, there were such incidents as an attack by U.S., South Vietnamese, and Korean armed forces on a Cambodian village along with aircraft of the same armed forces, after which U.S. and South Vietnamese troops invaded and burnt the villages, among other examples.⁴²³

Now the same media that helped conceal these and earlier U.S. attacks on Cambodia, as elsewhere in Indochina, are retrospectively eliminating the U.S. role from history and attributing the consequences of the U.S. attack to its surviving victims.

The peasant army that captured Phnom Penh did not conform to the colonialist cliché. They were not gentle folk with a delightful Khmer smile:

The troops that seized Phnom Penh were dark-skinned peasants. Their close-cropped hair was covered by the traditional checkered peasant headcloth, their uniforms the faded remnants of what had once been olive green fatigues...They neither talked nor smiled. Some appear to be as old as 25 or 30, but a majority seem to be between 12 and 15 years old...Many had probably never seen a city street or a lawn before. Their appearance was equally shocking to many of the residents of Phnom Penh.⁴²⁴

They had suffered bitterly in a war that had been fought with no quarter. Their enemy was a foreign power that had come to destroy their villages and land, and an urban society, hardly less foreign in their eyes, a colonial implantation that they know only as a murderer and a remote oppressor. In the regions where there had been brutal suppression of peasant revolts, there were many scores to settle. In the dark recesses of peasant life and history, unstudied and unknown beyond, there no doubt lay the roots of many more. The latent conflict was churned to a tempest of violence by the armed might of the United States, striking its savage blows directly or by the hands of its local clients. In Vietnam and Laos, where the circumstances were different though comparable, there appears to have been little murderous vengeance—little, that is, by historical standards. In Cambodia, however, the dark-skinned peasants exacted a fearful toll. Of that, there is little doubt.

Beyond that, evidence is slight and unreliable, and informed opinion ranges over quite a wide spectrum. At one extreme, we find Ponchaud—or rather, several different Ponchauds. One of them estimates “peace deaths” at over a million (including more than 100,000 killed); a second alleges that the Khmer Rouge were making good their

formidable boast to eliminate 5-7 million people; and a third speaks of “the deaths of millions of Khmers.” He regards it as established that a centralized plan dictated a systematic program of terror, massacre and oppression in every town and village, and apparently accepts Lacouture’s interpretation that a small group of men who proclaim their Marxist ideology were systematically massacring and starving the people of Cambodia.

Across the spectrum opinions vary. Many, including State Department experts, are quite skeptical of a toll of “millions of Khmers”—we wonder, frankly, whether Ponchaud really believes such figures—and offer estimates of killed ranging from “thousands” upwards, with many more deaths from starvation and disease, though perhaps not the million such deaths predicted by U.S. government sources before the war’s end. Many specialists suspect that executions were heavily concentrated in regions of little Khmer Rouge control and unusual peasant discontent and hatred, intensified by war and the U.S. bombings, particularly those of 1973.

There are also varying opinions on the character and effectiveness of Khmer Rouge social and economic programs and the roots of postwar Cambodian society in the traditional culture, Khmer nationalism, and the ideology of the leadership.

We suspect that the main body of informed opinion would accept the tempered comments of such critics of the Khmer Rouge as Charles Meyer that “one should be extremely careful in one’s analysis of the politics” of the Khmer Rouge, whose leaders “incarnate really a part of the peasants, who recognized themselves in them,” considering carefully such factors as “the weight of the past, the ideology of the leaders, the menaces from outside, and, naturally, the psychological factors as well as the economical, religious and other ones.”⁴²⁵ Informed opinion would also not dispute the judgment of Laura Summers that “...the Khmer revolution is the expression of deep cultural and social malaise unleashed by a sudden and violent foreign assault on the nation’s social structure.”⁴²⁶

If a serious study of the impact of Western imperialism on Cambodian peasant life is someday undertaken, it may well be discovered that the violence lurking behind the Khmer smile, on which Meyer and others have commented, is not a reflection of obscure traits in peasant culture and psychology, but is the direct and understandable response to the violence of the imperial system, and that its current manifestations are a no less direct and understandable response to the still more concentrated and extreme savagery of a U.S. assault that may in part have been designed to evoke this very response, as we have noted.

Such a study may also show that the Khmer Rouge programs elicited a positive response from sectors of the Cambodian peasantry because they dealt with fundamental problems rooted in the feudal past and exacerbated by the imperial system with its final outburst of uncontrolled barbarism. Such a study, however, has yet to be undertaken. The West is much more concerned to excise from history the imperial role and to pretend that the history of contemporary Cambodia begins in April 1975 in a manner that is disconnected from the imperial legacy and must be explained by the lunacy of “nine men at the center” who were systematically massacring and starving the population in a form of “auto-genocide” that surpasses the horrors of Nazism.

While many questions remain open about Cambodia during the 1975-78 period that we have reviewed, on another question, the one that primarily concerns us, we feel that the facts are clear and overwhelming. The theory of the Free Press that we have been discussing throughout these two volumes is once again dramatically confirmed. The media, in this case as in others reviewed earlier, are serving in effect as a propaganda agency for the state. It is a fair generalization that the more extreme the condemnation of Cambodia, the more confident the claim that “Communism” lies at the roots of its present travail, the more diminished the U.S. share and responsibility—then the greater the exposure. The nature and quality of the evidence presented is of little moment. It is an astonishing fact that where evidence is subject to some independent check, it repeatedly and with remarkable consistency turns out to be fabricated, misleading, or dubious. Furthermore, exposure of falsehoods and fabrication is dismissed as insignificant and unimportant or is even condemned as apologetics for terror. Known fabrications and material of a most dubious nature continue to be exploited long after exposure. The extreme condemnations that constitute the standard fare in the media rest almost entirely on reports that cannot be checked, transmitted by sources that are revealed to be of extremely low credibility where they are subject to some verification.

Critics are not sent to concentration camps; Western societies are indeed free in this respect. Rather, they are permitted to speak to one another, within tiny circles. Meanwhile an image is concocted of a mighty force that must be vigorously combated by those courageous souls who try to stem the flood of apologetics; or it is claimed, with equal merit, that these lone voices must somehow find a way to penetrate the barriers of silence and unconcern. The propaganda system has been committed to eke what profit it could from the misery of Cambodia. Questions of truth are secondary. The serious moral issues that arise—the issues of the real locus of responsibility, the obligations to the victims, and the probable human consequences of the media barrage—have been entirely beyond the

comprehension or concern of those who preach in the most strident tones of moral obligations. What enters history in the United States (and, we believe, the West generally, though we have not examined the media systematically elsewhere) is a version of the facts that suits the ideological requirements of dominant social groups; other interpretations, whatever their merits, are simply swept aside. The central theme that liberation from Western domination is a fate to be avoided at all costs is constantly and persistently drilled into popular consciousness. So effective is the awesome system of indoctrination and thought control that even many people who have been critics or skeptics are caught up in the well-orchestrated hysteria.

When the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct. But even if that turns out to be the case, it will in no way alter the conclusions we have reached on the central question addressed here: how the available facts were selected, modified, or sometimes invented to create a certain image offered to the general population. The answer to this question seems clear, and it is unaffected by whatever may yet be discovered about Cambodia in the future.

We urge once again that the reader concerned with the workings of Western propaganda compare the treatment of Cambodia—and the other societies of Indochina as well—with the attention given to other cases where the evidence available, the scale and character of the atrocities alleged, and even the time frame is comparable: Timor, for example. We stress again that in the case of Cambodia, as all observers of even moderate seriousness agree, what happened in the 1975-78 period under review, whatever it may have been, lay beyond our control, whereas in the case of Timor and other ongoing benign and constructive bloodbaths, that is far from true. Perhaps evidence will be forthcoming to support the claim of the British Foreign Office that “many hundreds of thousands of people have perished in Cambodia directly or indirectly as a result of the policies of the Communist government,” evidence more credible than the material on which they uncritically relied. There is no doubt that many hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people have perished in other third world countries in the same period as a direct or indirect result of the policies of Western powers, victims of aggression, starvation, disease, hideous conditions of work, death squads, etc. Furthermore, this will continue, with continuing Western responsibility but without government protest or media exposure. The conclusions from such a comparison seem obvious.

Finally, perhaps we should stress some obvious points about what the future may reveal. We speculated in the preface that the Vietnamese invasion may prove disastrous for

Cambodia. Any assessment of the resulting conditions should be carefully compared with what visitors observed just prior to the invasion—specifically, with their general assessment that food supplies appeared adequate and that there were certain constructive developments, whatever one may think of the regime.⁴²⁷ If there is a deterioration in the conditions of Cambodia, this is very likely a consequence of the invasion itself; and here again the Western contribution cannot be ignored, including the special role played by the propaganda hysteria and climate of opinion of 1975-78, discussed at length above. A no less obvious point is that for some time at least, the Vietnamese (like the Pol Pot regime) are likely to permit only a guided and selected view, so that interpretation of any evidence that may become available will necessarily have to be subjected to critical analysis. The media record hardly encourages optimism, in this regard.

Final Comments

We have explored some of the ways in which the propaganda systems of the West, primarily that of the United States, have faced the major tasks noted in chapter 1 of this volume. Not surprisingly, inquiry reveals a highly selective culling of facts and much outright lying. Some areas of the world are almost entirely blacked out, where disclosure of major abuses would disturb both pliable clients and the U.S. economic, military and political interests that find this pliability advantageous. As we have described throughout the two volumes, the first principle of the Free Press is the averting of the eyes from benign or constructive terror, along with a general avoidance of invidious language and a sympathetic understanding for the difficult problems faced by the terrorizing elites backed by the United States. In sharp contrast, countries that ordinarily evoke minimal Western interest are thrust into the limelight when “enemy” terror and the evils of Communism can be revealed, and other useful lessons drawn. Thus the second principle of the Free Press is the intense and dedicated search for nefarious terror, which can be brought into focus without giving offense to any important groups and which contributes to domestic ideological mobilization.

Further devices used in handling nefarious terror, as we have described, include the stripping away of historical context, fabrication, and myth creation. Useful myths, once successfully instituted, are virtually immune to correction. In focusing on refugees fleeing from Indochina and the prevailing harsh conditions there, the Western media employ a third principle of the Free Press, namely, “agent transference.” That is, the critical role of the United States in maintaining internecine conflict from 1954, and its more direct shattering of the Indochinese societies and their economic foundations, is acknowledged only occasionally and as an afterthought. The only “agents” to whom responsibility is indignantly attributed for the suffering in Indochina are the new regimes that came into power in a presumably normal environment in 1975. Death and suffering from malnutrition and disease in societies brought to ruin by U.S. intervention are displayed as proof of the evil nature of Communism. Meanwhile, in the U.S. sphere of influence working conditions of extraordinary severity, massive dispossession of the peasantry, child labor, near slavery, starvation in the midst of rapid economic “growth,” and similar concomitants of development in accord with the Free World model are, if noted at all, dismissed as an unfortunate element of the process of modernization. And the hundreds of thousands of refugees from Latin American subfascism, or the plight of the victims of

Indonesian aggression in East Timor or other benign and constructive terror in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and the causes of their plight, are studiously ignored, in recognition of the friendly client status of the official terrorists and the absence of any useful lessons to be drawn from their depredations.

There are further and more general aims to be served by the extensive effort to dispel what the *Wall Street Journal* calls the “simple-minded myth” that Indochina’s suffering is somehow related to U.S. actions over the past thirty years. For the groups that dominate economic, social, political and intellectual life in the United States, it is a matter of urgency to ensure that no serious challenge is raised to their predominant role, either in ideology or in practice. While mild social reforms have been introduced in the United States, others now conventional in Western Europe (e.g., national health insurance, minimal “worker participation” in industry, etc.) have been effectively resisted here, and there has been remarkable success in designing policy so that state intervention in the economy and social life serves the needs of the wealthy and powerful. We have noted that the absence of an organized left opposition in the United States has facilitated the work of the system of thought control and indoctrination. U.S. ideologists have been unusually successful in conducting “the engineering of consent,” a technique of control that substitutes for the use of force in societies with democratic forms.¹ To serve this end, every effort must be made to discredit what is called “socialism” or “communism.” In its more vulgar forms, the argument is that “socialism” or “Marxism” (which in practice means unwelcome social reform, since radical institutional change is hardly an immediate issue) leads inevitably to Gulag. The process of agent transference has made more plausible the doctrine that socialism must inevitably become tyranny. A recent media favorite is the group of Paris “new philosophers,” whose congenial message that Marxism equals Gulag has assured them a ready and uncritical audience in the United States and Western Europe. In fact, their critique of authoritarian elements in Marxism-Leninism is remarkably shallow as compared with the long tradition of left-wing libertarian thought that has been virtually ignored in the West, and their enormous success in France reflects in part conditions specific to French intellectual life,² but U.S. media have little care or understanding for any of this. The access of this group to the media and the receptivity to their slogans is a perfect counterpart to the curtain of silence drawn over the proliferating Gulags in the U.S. sphere, as well as the agent transference in Indochina.

There is, to be sure, an element of absurdity in the constant refrain that socialism equals Gulag, as revealed by events in the underdeveloped societies. A comparison of the

problems facing such societies as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Mozambique, etc., with the situation in the industrial West would simply be ridiculed in societies that were not subjected to such effective ideological control as ours. But despite the inherent absurdity of attributing, say, revenge killings by Cambodian peasants who were bombed out of their homes by Western force to “Marxism” or “atheism,” the practice is common and quite successful as a tactic in engineering consent to the priorities and structures of contemporary state capitalism.

In the United States, this tactic has become a virtual reflex. Bolshevik and later Stalinist crimes have regularly been exploited as a weapon against movements seeking reform or revolutionary change. During the Red Scare after World War I, which was quite effective in controlling labor militancy and eliminating radical intellectual currents, the *Wall Street Journal* wailed: “We talk of parlor Bolsheviks, but what of those other Bolsheviks, in the Cabinet, or at any rate near the throne?” Similar accusations, loosely associating reform Democrats with Stalinist crimes despite the eager and frightened collaboration of many liberals were common during the era mislabelled “McCarthyism.” Harry Truman even denounced the civil rights movement of the 1950s as a Communist plot—conceding, in response to inquiry, that he had no proof, but explaining: “I know that usually when trouble hits the country the Kremlin is behind it.”³ The 1970s campaign against “Big Government” (understood to cover health and welfare activities but not the police and military establishment) is likewise facilitated by a propaganda barrage carrying the implicit message that “socialism equals Gulag.” In this context, too, it is an effective tactic to focus attention on real or invented atrocities committed in underdeveloped ex-colonies that use the phrase “socialism” in reference to their programs of mass mobilization under authoritarian state control to carry out industrialization and modernization.

One final factor merits a few words of comment. So-called “North-South conflicts” do not necessarily take the form of imperial intervention. At various levels and in a multitude of interactions there is a continuing struggle over access to resources, terms of trade, opportunities for international capital and other problems. A general public mood of hostility to the Third World is useful to the managers of the industrial democracies as they attempt to manipulate these conflicts to their benefit. In contrast, the sympathy towards Third World independence movements that developed during the post-World War II struggles for national liberation, brutally repressed primarily by France and the United States, is an impediment to the imposition of measures that will meet the requirements of the world’s wealthy industrial powers. In this context, it is useful to engender hatred, contempt and moralistic outrage directed against the nationalist movements of the Third

World, particularly those that have recently escaped from the domination of the United States. It should hardly come as a surprise, therefore, that a major effort should be directed towards reversing the worldwide currents of sympathy towards the people of Indochina that were aroused by the assault of the U.S. war machine. That struggle came to be perceived as symbolic of the conflicts between the industrialized West and the former colonial domains, and it imposed barriers to the mobilization of public support for the traditional measures that may be required to preserve a favorable investment climate in the coming era.

These remarks bear directly on the framework of Western propaganda. They do not touch another and very different question: how should one evaluate the programs and character of the countries that have been liberated from Western domination, or respond to developments there? Our primary concern here has been U.S. global policy and propaganda, and the filtering and distorting effect of Western ideology, not the problems of reconstruction and modernization in societies that have been victimized by Western imperialism. Correspondingly, we have not developed or expressed our views here on the nature of the Indochinese regimes. To assess the contemporary situation in Indochina and the programs of the current ruling groups is a worthwhile endeavor, but it has not been our objective.

As for appropriate response, its central component in the current situation should be a committed and very substantial effort to help the victims, insofar as this is possible: those who are oppressed, those who have fled, those who are seeking to reconstruct some kind of viable existence from the wreckage. Such response is not to be discerned among the dominant classes and states of either East or West.

There is no single cause for the misery and oppression that we find in every part of the world. But there are some major causes, and some of these are close at hand and subject to our influence and, ultimately, our control. These factors and the social matrix in which they are embedded will engage the concern and efforts of people who are honestly committed to alleviate human suffering and to contribute to freedom and justice.

The success of the Free Press in reconstructing imperial ideology since the U.S. withdrawal from Indochina has been spectacular. The shift of the United States from causal agent to concerned bystander—and even to leader in the world struggle for human rights—in the face of its empire of client fascism and long, vicious assault on the peasant societies of Indochina, is a remarkable achievement. The system of brainwashing under freedom, with mass media voluntary self-censorship in accord with the larger interests of

the state, has worked brilliantly. The new propaganda line has been established by endless repetition of the Big Distortions and negligible grant of access to non-establishment points of view; all rendered more effective by the illusion of equal access and the free flow of ideas. U.S. dissenters can produce their Samizdats freely, and stay out of jail, but they do not reach the general public or the Free Press except on an episodic basis. This reflects the power and interests that benefit from the uncontrolled arms race, the status quo of domestic economic arrangements, and the external system of multinational expansion and collaboration with the Shahs, Suhartos, Marcoses in the contemporary “development” and sacking of the Third World. Change will come only when material facts arouse sufficient numbers to force a reassessment of policy. At the present time, the machine expands, the mass media adapt to the political economy, and human rights are set aside except in rhetorical flourishes useful for ideological reconstruction.

Notes

Preface to the 2014 Edition

1. Among other publications, see E.S. Herman and N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1988, Pantheon; second edition with new introduction, 2002. N. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 1989, South End. Edward Herman and Robert McChesney, *Global Media: the Missionaries of Global Capitalism*, 1997.
2. For review, see N. Chomsky, “‘Green Light’ for War Crimes,” in Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line* (Verso, 2000). Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen Shalom, eds., *East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*, Roman & Littlefield, 2000 (in which a slightly different version of “‘Green Light’ for War Crimes” also appears). For detailed review of the early years, in addition to the chapter reprinted here, see Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (1982).
3. See *Manufacturing Consent*.
4. Fallows, *Atlantic*, June 1982. Power, “*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*,” Basic Books, 2002.
5. Moynihan with Suzanne Weaver, *A Dangerous Place*, Little, Brown, 1978.
6. John Holdridge (State Dept.), Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2nd sess., Sept. 14, 1982, 71.
7. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.
8. Open Society Foundation, *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition*, Feb. 2013.
9. Greg Grandin, “The Latin American Exception,” <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175650/>.

Preface

1. Peter Weintraub, “The exodus and the agony,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 December 1978.
2. *Ibid.*

3. Editor's Comment, "Refugees, blackmail and a remedy," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 January 1979.
4. President Carter, explaining that "as long as I am president, the government of the United States will continue throughout the world to enhance human rights. No force on earth can separate us from that commitment," which is "the soul of our foreign policy." Presumably, the force that has separated us from that commitment in Iran, Indonesia, the Philippines and elsewhere is extra-terrestrial. Edward Walsh, "Carter Asserts Human Rights Is 'Soul of Our Foreign Policy,'" *Washington Post*, 7 December 1978.
5. See chapter 6, note 228.
6. Nayan Chanda, "Cambodia: Fifteen days that shook Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 January 1979.
7. "Ho's will is done," *Economist*, 13 January 1979. The same was true quite generally. Thus the *Washington Post* commented editorially that while the Vietnamese invasion "was not, of course, a direct response to Sen. McGovern" (who had called for military intervention several months before), nonetheless "it probably did arise in part from a perception that Pol Pot's demise would be accepted as a deliverance in every corner of the international community except Peking"—as it was by the *Post*. Editorial, "Phnom Penh falls," 9 January 1979.
8. Jay Mathews, "Sihanouk to Aid Ousted Rulers," *Washington Post* (9 January 1979), reporting from Peking.
9. John Fraser, *Toronto Globe and Mail*, reporting from Peking, reprinted in the *Christian Science Monitor* (12 January 1979).
10. Jay Mathews, "Sihanouk: 'We Were Privileged, Compared to the Rest,'" *Washington Post* (9 January 1979).

According to a direct transcript of the tape that we have received from journalists who were present, the omitted material reads: "If you allow me to speak about the common people, the common people, food, cooking: the cooking is good, clean, clean. The dining rooms are clean. They have good hygiene, Asian hygiene..." Sihanouk added that "the conditions of life are good. At the beginning, yes, we were in difficulty because of the war, the revenge of the war. But now it is good! Now? Before the conquest of our country by the Vietnamese the conditions were good, were good, I can say, I can assure you."

We have kept in the text to the rendition of Sihanouk's remarks that appeared in the U.S. press. These are not always exactly accurate, according to the transcript, but they convey the sense accurately, though many of Sihanouk's more favorable comments concerning the regime do not appear. Thus he said that "I would like to see my government, the government of my country, presided over by Pol Pot and the Communist Party of Cambodia...it is right of the Pol Pot regime to do what they have done, since the people accept their status...I do not pretend to say that they have violated human rights. Perhaps they are right, I don't know. Sincerely, I do not know. I have not the right to condemn them. I could not condemn them." Responding to a question from Fox Butterfield of the *New York Times*, Sihanouk made it clear that he opposed the internal regimentation, lack of communication, and other restrictions. But though "my conscience is not in agreement with my friends the Khmers Rouges,...it seems to me that the majority of the people agree with Pol Pot and his team so far as the regime is concerned. In fact—there is it seems a better social justice. Why? Because the rich, there are no more rich, and the poor, they are less poor, so there is a movement of unification of Cambodian society. There is no rich, there is no poor. This is, I think, what pleases the Cambodian people—I say. I think the majority...I think there are some disadvantages. But for the poorest I think there are advantages, because you know their houses are better—their food is better."

[11.](#) Mathews, "Sihanouk to Aid Ousted Rulers."

[12.](#) Norodom Sihanouk, address to the UN Security Council, representing Democratic Kampuchea, *Guardian* (New York), 24 January 1979. The week before the *Guardian* had reprinted the entire program of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Survival (KNUFNS; the Khmer group placed in power by the Vietnamese). It is remarkable that one has to turn to the tiny Marxist-Leninist press to find a record of such documents in the media.

[13.](#) Mathews, "Sihanouk to Aid Ousted Rulers."

[14.](#) *Guardian*, op. cit.

[15.](#) Mathews, "Sihanouk: 'We Were Privileged, Compared to the Rest.'"

[16.](#) William Borders, "Task Facing India: Easing Misery of Masses," *New York Times* (2 January 1979), quoting the well-known nutritionist Jean Mayer. The report describes families who are seriously undernourished while high-quality wheat that they cannot afford to buy is stored "in sheds and warehouses all over the country." This is not an

atrocities by Western standards, but rather a difficult problem yet to be solved.

17. Ho Kwon Ping, "Thailand's broken ricebowl," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 December 1978.
18. *Ibid.*
19. See Stephen R. Heder, "Origins of the Conflict," *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, no. 64, September-October 1978, and for further detail, Heder's article "The Historical Bases of the Kampuchean-Vietnam Conflict: Development of the Kampuchean Communist Movement and Its Relations with Vietnamese Communism, 1930-1970," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, volume 11, no. 1, 1979.
20. In an accompanying article in the same issue of the *Southeast Asia Chronicle* (see note 19), Heder reviews the history of the delineation of the border, which had been readjusted by the French to the detriment of Cambodia for two main reasons: Cambodia was only a protectorate while Cochinchina (approximately the southern third of re-united Vietnam) was a full colony viewed by the French "as literally French territory"; "The commercial agricultural interests of the French colonists in Cochinchina were much stronger and much better organized than those in Kampuchea," and therefore were able to impel the French imperial rulers to adjust the boundary in their favor. As a result, many ethnic Khmer areas were included in Cochinchina.
21. It was certainly obvious to any visitor to Hanoi during the war. The Vietnamese, while clearly trying to maintain a balance in the Sino-Soviet dispute and to contribute to healing it if possible, went out of their way to express their concern over potential Chinese expansionism, often rather symbolically, for example, by elaborate references to much earlier history.
22. For further discussion of the international aspects of the conflict, see Lowell Finley, "Raising the Stakes," in the *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, no. 64.
23. Bernard Weinraub, "Vietnamese Said to Shatter a Big Cambodian Force," *New York Times* (3 December 1978).
24. "Vietnam Offensive Reportedly Starts in Northeast Cambodia," *Washington Post* (5 December 1978), datelined Bangkok.
25. Nayan Chanda, "Words, not deeds, from Peking," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 December 1978.

[26.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Cambodia: Fifteen Days that Shook Asia.”

[27.](#) *Ibid.*

[28.](#) William Chapman, “Cambodian resistance builds,” *Washington Post* (18 January 1979) citing a “source” who reports that “The Vietnamese have the towns, and the Cambodians have the countryside” and reporting surprise by “informed sources” in Bangkok at the “swiftness with which [guerrilla counter-attack] has flourished in so many places.” Richard Nations, “Pol Pot Forces Regroup, Harass Vietnamese in Cambodian Countryside,” *Washington Post* (26 January 1979) and “Major Khmer Rouge Attacks on Vietnamese Yield Success,” *Ibid.*, (31 January 1979), reporting that the Vietnamese hold “an almost empty strategic shell” while the Khmer Rouge move with considerable freedom “among the population in the countryside,” with serious fighting throughout much of the country: “the Khmer Rouge appear to have ‘jerked the anvil out from under the Vietnamese hammer blow,’ in the words of one veteran Indochina analyst” while another estimates that 60,000 men have regrouped in large units of the Cambodian army; “rice has had to be airlifted into Battambang and Siem Reap—the traditional granaries of Cambodia—a good indication that the Vietnamese either cannot move into the countryside or find no food when they arrive” and that “the Khmer Rouge appear to have denied their enemies the stocks of fuel and food the Vietnamese appear to have been counting on”; “It now looks like a far longer, bloodier and more expensive operation than Hanoi probably counted on,” one observer said. See also Henry Kamm, “Vietnamese Army Is Said to Face Vigorous Cambodian Resistance,” *New York Times* (2 February 1979).

[29.](#) Elizabeth Becker, “Offensive Threatens Cambodia’s Capital,” *Washington Post* (6 January 1979).

[30.](#) Kamm, *op. cit.*

[31.](#) The standard assumption of the Western media is that “the Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia was presumably hated by almost everybody” (London *Economist*, 27 January 1979). This was written at the same time that Western intelligence was issuing analyses of the sort indicated in note 28. The *Economist* adds that “the Khmers Rouges are physically isolated from a source of supplies to a degree that Vietnam never was after the early days of the French war.” That is accurate, and may lead to the crushing of resistance whatever the actual level of popular support may be, a question that is considerably more open than the standard line of the media indicates.

[32](#). Malcolm W. Browne, “Red Clash on Cambodia: Big Hit at the U.N.,” *New York Times* (13 January 1979).

1 The Setting

- [1](#). For details concerning this remarkable episode, see N. Chomsky, “The Peace Hoax,” *Liberation*, January 1973: “Endgame: the tactics of peace in Vietnam,” *Ramparts*, April 1973; “Reporting Indochina: the news media and the legitimization of lies,” *Social Policy*, September-October 1973. On the history of the negotiations and their aftermath, see Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied*, Indiana, 1975.
- [2](#). Cf. AP, “U.S. Trade Embargo Against Hanoi Quietly Extended by President,” *Washington Post*, 14 September 1978: “President Carter, rebuffing persistent signals of friendship from Vietnam, is quietly extending the U.S. trade embargo against Hanoi.” Officials concede that there are “sound economic arguments for lifting the embargo,” since “trade with Vietnam could help cut back on the U.S. trade deficit.” But the importance of punishing the Vietnamese and internal political considerations far outweigh these concerns.
- [3](#). On these matters, see Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War*, Random House, 1969; Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power*, Harper & Row, 1972. On the United States and the European labor movement, see Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy*, Random House, 1969; Alfred W. McCoy et al., *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, Harper & Row, 1972, chapter 2; Fred Hirsch and Richard Fletcher, *CIA and the Labour Movement*, Spokesman, 1977; Roy Godson, *American Labor and European Politics*, Crane, Russak, & Co., 1976. This last work, based on internal AFL documents, explains how the AFL exploited postwar starvation to transfer power to its own associates by keeping food from their opponents, employed gangsters as strike breakers to split the labor movement, undermined efforts of French labor to block shipments to the French forces attempting to reconquer Indochina, and so on. All of this is presented in glowing terms as a great humanitarian achievement in defense of democracy, liberty, and a free trade union movement.
- [4](#). *Dialogue*, journal of the Trilateral Commission, no. 18, Summer, 1978, p. 15.
- [5](#). Richard West, “Re-fighting the Vietnam war,” *Spectator*, 16 July 1977. West was one of the more perceptive and independent-minded of the foreign correspondents in Vietnam for many years. On the consequences for the U.S. Army, see David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, Doubleday, 1975.

6. See the references of footnote 1.
7. Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy*, Horizon, 1977, p. 148.
8. T.D. Allman, "The U.S. refugee policy," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 12 April 1975. It is interesting to compare the euphoric descriptions regularly offered by apologists. See e.g., P.J. Honey, "Viet Nam Argument," *Encounter*, November 1965, for a typical example, in mid-course.
9. For details, see N. Chomsky and E.S. Herman, "Saigon's Corruption Crisis," *Ramparts*, December 1974; Porter, *op. cit.*; Buttinger, *op. cit.*; Maynard Parker, "Vietnam: The War That Won't End," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1975; Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval*, Random House, 1977.
10. Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, Doubleday, 1967, pp. 33-34.
11. On the role of this prime candidate for a war crimes trial, as depicted largely in his own words, see N. Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973, pp. 87ff. Komer is now a respected official in the Human Rights administration.
12. Snepp, *op. cit.*, p. 568. This book should be read with caution. Though Snepp resigned from the CIA and is critical of U.S. errors, he writes completely within the general framework of the state propaganda system and, despite his alleged expertise, repeatedly offers propaganda fabrications as fact. For example, Snepp repeats standard myths with regard to the North Vietnamese land reform and the Hue massacre (pp. 211, 354); his account suffers further from internal inconsistency in the numbers game. See Volume I, chapter 5, sections 2.2, 2.3. See also chapter 2, footnote 9, below.
13. 4 May 1977. The same editorial laments that the Northerners who "are streaming down to manage the reconstruction" are "dispersing the discontented middle classes, appropriating the consumer goods while denouncing them as alien"; while in Cambodia, Communist purges are "said to have taken hundreds of thousands of lives" and in "lovely little Laos,...the elites are fleeing to Thailand." We return below to the question of how the *Times* reacted when it learned that "lovely little Laos" was being "secretly" bombed by the state it serves and to the alleged facts in this editorial about "what we have learned."
14. See Volume I, chapter 5. The media do most of their editorializing in what are called "news reports," a far more effective device since propaganda is disguised as objective fact. Thus in a column by *Times Asia* correspondent Fox Butterfield we read that "the Communist victory last year and the coming formal unification evidently have made the

fiction of a separate southern movement no longer necessary,” New York Times (25 April 1976). That the separate southern movement was a fiction was, of course, a staple of U.S. propaganda, dutifully repeated by obedient journalists though rejected by many serious analysts; Bernard Fall, for example. Typically the Times simply intones government propaganda without qualification. Times correspondents could hardly be expected to take note of the fact that the southern movement, however one may debate its status, was destroyed by the U.S. aggression that the Times supported; how much more convenient to exploit this consequence as proof that it was a fiction no longer needed by the devious communists.

- [15.](#) John Pilger, “Vietnam: Do not weep for those just born,” *New Statesman*, 15 September 1978; Canadian officials reported by 1965 that Vinh, a city of 60,000, had been flattened; cf. Fall, *Last Reflections*, pp. 232-33. See Jean and Simonne Lacouture. *Vietnam: voyage à travers une victoire*, Seuil, 1976, for a graphic eyewitness description of the extent and character of the damage to property and persons throughout Vietnam. The literature on the consequences of the U.S. war is substantial. See, among others, E.S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities*, Pilgrim Press, 1970; J.B. Neiland, et al., *Harvest of Death*, Free Press, 1972; J.C. Pomonti, *La Rage d’être Vietnamien*, Seuil, 1974; and many other sources.
- [16.](#) Internal documents, in contrast, make it clear that the United States explicitly intended, from immediately after the “disaster” of the Geneva Accords, to use military force “to defeat local Communist subversion or rebellion not constituting armed attack,” in direct defiance of the “supreme law of the land” which restricts the use of force to self-defense against armed attack, and to extend the use of such force elsewhere, including China, if need be. NSC 5429/2, August 1954. These crucial and explicit recommendations were too hot to handle for the Pentagon Papers historians, who seriously misrepresented the contents of the document, and they are consistently ignored by academic scholarship, no doubt for similar reasons. Cf. *For Reasons of State*, pp. 100f.
- [17.](#) Despite the massive destruction caused by the war, the NLF-PRG nevertheless was able to play a substantial role to the end. See, for example, the eyewitness report of the capture of Quang Ngai by southern PRG forces, with barely a shot being fired, by Earl S. Martin, a Mennonite social worker in Vietnam who was fluent in Vietnamese; *Reaching the Other Side*, Crown, 1978. The press generally referred only to a North Vietnamese invasion.

[18.](#) See Volume I, chapter 5, section 1.2. See also London *Economist*, “The bottle stayed corked,” 13 May 1978: “The original purpose of that long, *inefficient* war was to keep Indochina as the ‘cork in the bottle’” (our emphasis). The choice of adjective is revealing: would the *Economist* speak of the German bombing of England merely as “inefficient”? The distinction reflects the deep racist and imperialist assumptions that permeate Western liberal thought. We return directly to the quite comparable “pragmatic” opposition to the war on the part of U.S. “doves.”

For detailed analysis of this strategy, based on internal documents, see *For Reasons of State*, chapter 1, section V; also R.B. DuBoff, “Business ideology and foreign policy,” in *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel edition, vol. 5, N. Chomsky and H. Zinn, eds., *Critical Essays*, Beacon, 1972. The rational imperial planning that always lay behind the U.S. intervention in Vietnam has been effectively written out of history by U.S. scholars, as inconsistent with the image of U.S. benevolence (or perhaps, “tragic error”) that “responsible scholarship” must convey. For some recent discussion see Chomsky, ‘*Human Rights*’ and *American Foreign Policy*, Spokesman, 1978; *Intellectuals and the State*, Het Wereldvenster, 1978.

[19.](#) This scandalous policy is based in part on rational imperial strategy, and in part simply on chauvinist pique of the sort expressed by Asian scholar Robert Scalapino of Berkeley, who said in Hong Kong that “We Americans have got used to the idea of aiding those we defeat in war, but I find it unacceptable for the U.S. to aid a country which has defeated us.” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 July 1977.

[20.](#) Gavin Young, “The nonviolent war in Southeast Asia; Let’s see which system works best, say the members of ASEAN, a five-nation, noncommunist bloc, which is working to obliterate communism, not with bombs but with prosperity,” *London Observer*, reprinted in the *Boston Globe* (15 October 1978).

[21.](#) For discussion of these matters, see N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Pantheon, 1969; ‘*Human Rights*’ and *American Foreign Policy*. See Charles Kadushin, *The American Intellectual Elite*, Little, Brown, 1974, for detailed analysis of attitudes of a certain group of intellectuals towards the war.

[22.](#) Mitchell S. Ross, *New Republic*, 18 June 1977.

[23.](#) We cannot take the space here to explore the astonishing comparison between the support of volunteers for the Spanish Loyalists against Franco’s Moroccan army backed by military forces from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, with U.S. government

intervention to impose and support client fascism in South Vietnam. Notice how, in Peters' account, the U.S. military forces that were bombing South Vietnamese before we "began to go wrong" in 1965 have become "volunteers" who were "help[ing] the South." By the term "South," Peters is referring to the client regime established by the United States, not the people of South Vietnam, who, as U.S. analysts at the time and later were well aware, had little use for the U.S. creation and to a substantial extent supported the NLF (about half the population, according to U.S. analysts, a higher proportion than supported the American rebels in the revolutionary war; see chapter 2, section 2).

[24.](#) "Deliverance," editorial, *Washington Post* (30 April 1975).

[25.](#) *New York Times* (21, 24 April, 1 May 1975).

[26.](#) Richard Strout (TRB), *New Republic*, 25 April 1975.

[27.](#) The real ends of U.S. intervention in Indochina, as disclosed by state documents, indicate an almost total amorality and willingness to use force in complete disregard of law to achieve balance of power and economic objectives. Democracy, independence, self-determination and the welfare of Indochina were useful manipulative symbols, but their relevance to policy decisions of U.S. leaders approached zero in value.

[28.](#) *Dissent*, Summer 1964; Russell's criticism is reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam*, Monthly Review Press, 1967.

[29.](#) Editor's comment, *Dissent*, Spring 1975. They have yet to comment on their confident prediction that "all" of the millions of people who fought against the Communists would be slaughtered, their reason for supporting the U.S. "intervention," which by 1964 already involved major U.S. military activities, massive forced-population removal, and other atrocities.

[30.](#) *Dissent*, Fall 1978. They explain that while *they do not accept the premises of the question*, others are raising it, so that it should be discussed; evidently, they consider it a serious question, worthy of discussion. On the ambiguity of their own current attitudes towards the exercise of force and violence by the United States, see the comments by the editors on the question of military intervention.

[31.](#) See chapter 6, footnote 7.

[32.](#) Cited by Marilyn Young, "Critical Amnesia," *Nation*, 2 April 1977, from the *New Republic*, 22 January 1977. Young discusses this and other comparable reviews of

Emerson's book in the *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books*.

[33.](#) Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966*, Houghton Mifflin, 1966.

[34.](#) On the so-called "McCarthyite period," a term that minimizes the role of cold war liberals, see David Caute, *The Great Fear: the Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower*, Simon and Schuster, 1978; Mary S. McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left: Cold war Politics and American Liberals, 1947-1954*, University of Massachusetts, 1978; Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America*, Schenkman, 1978. See also Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*, Knopf, 1972; Michael P. Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: the Radical Specter*, MIT, 1967. On the extensive and quite effective repression by the national political police (FBI) during the 1960s, see Morton H. Halperin *et al.*, *The Lawless State*, Penguin, 1976; N. Blackstock, ed., *COINTELPRO*, Random House, 1976; Dave Dellinger, *More Power than We Know*, Doubleday, 1975. The scale of FBI activities can be appreciated from one minor revelation. In civil suits charging the FBI with illegal surveillance it was revealed by the Bureau that in the Chicago office alone—one of 59 field offices—there were 3,207 linear feet of files under the "subversive" and "extremist" classifications, an estimated 7.7 million pages. From 1966 the Chicago FBI office paid out more than \$2.5 million to 5,145 informants. These classifications do not include sedition, sabotage, or other criminal investigative files. In the "subversive" classification there are such organizations as the American Civil Liberties Union; under "extremists" we find CORE, NAACP, the Afro-American Patrolmen's League, Rev. Jesse Jackson's operation PUSH, etc. Rob Warden, *Washington Post* (9 April 1978). *The Chicago documents also acknowledge an FBI break-in at the offices of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights*, which was formed during the "McCarthy" period to oppose government repression. *Washington Post*, AP (21 January 1978). On the efforts of the FBI in Chicago to incite murder of Black leaders and their involvement in political assassination when these efforts failed, see the references cited above. FBI surveillance was the least significant of the disruptive and often violent acts initiated by the Federal Government as opposition to its policies developed. On the "staggering dimensions" of FBI actions to ruin the personal lives of dissenters, foment violence, etc. see William M. Kunstler, "Writers of the Purple Page," *Nation*, 30 December 1978.

[35.](#) *Internews International Bulletin*, 13 February 1978.

- [36.](#) See for example the *New Republic* editorial, 29 April 1978, a defense of Carter against criticism which is coupled with a complaint that he and his advisers have only “vague notions about the East-West conflict which remains the central fact of international relations today.” The editors continue: “We thought we saw the beginnings of a coherent strategy in Carter’s ‘tough’ talk several weeks ago at Winston-Salem, North Carolina. But then the neutron bomb decision indicated that the president had been only talking.”
- [37.](#) Theodore Draper, “Appeasement & Détente,” *Commentary*, February 1976.
- [38.](#) John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, Norton, 1978. Stockwell was CIA station chief in Angola. He provides authoritative evidence that, despite the claims of Carter and the mass media, Soviet intervention in Angola *followed that of the United States* (pp. 66-67). *He resigned in protest from the CIA after Katangese based in Angola invaded their native province in Zaire (apparently, with considerable local support).* According to Stockwell, the CIA had warned of such retaliation if the United States persisted in supporting attacks on Angola mounted from Zaire, but the warning was ignored by Kissinger, who seems to have been interested in developing an international confrontation with the Russians as his efforts to subvert the Paris agreements collapsed in Vietnam. Cf. John Stockwell, “Why I am Leaving the CIA,” *Washington Post* (10 April 1977). See Seymour M. Hersh, “Kissinger-Colby Briefings on C.I.A. Called Misleading by Senate Panel,” *New York Times* (16 July 1978), on how Kissinger and Colby “misled Congress about the extent of the Central Intelligence Agency’s activities in the 1975 civil war in Angola, according to sources with first-hand knowledge”—to put it more bluntly, lied to Congress, the least significant but most discussed element of this sordid affair.
- [39.](#) Cited by Clayton Fritchey, “Encore for Pax Americana,” *Washington Post* (25 March 1978). Fritchey is critical of the renewal of interventionist ideology.
- [40.](#) Stephen S. Rosenfeld, “The case for using force against the third world,” *Washington Post* (5 May 1978), citing a Rand Corporation study by Guy J. Pauker. See also C. Cooper et al., *The American Experience with Pacification in Vietnam: an Overview of Pacification*, NTIS, U.S. Department of Commerce, March 1972, a study of pacification commissioned by the Pentagon and undertaken by the Institute for Defense Analysis, a university-based consortium, which “derives doctrinal and operational lessons from the US experience with pacification in South Vietnam to guide US policy-makers in providing technical assistance and advice in the future to a friendly

government facing an internal security problem.” The study explains the problems caused, for example, by the threat of “political struggle” from 1956 (13), and later, “the vast swarms of refugees from Viet Cong controlled or bombed-out villages” (xvi; “most [refugees fled] from battle-ravaged and bomb-destroyed hamlets and villages” (48), which confounded “American and Vietnamese humanitarian efforts” (xvi)), and by the “local bully boys...[who]...have made Saigon into a seething social jungle”(49). Other problems are caused by “our strong sense of social justice and morality” which leads us to take over programs best left to the friendly government (43). Some of the techniques suggested “should be tried on a pilot basis in one or two other insurgency situations (e.g., the Philippines)” (61).

- [41](#). Cf. Richard B. Du Boff and E.S. Herman, “The New Economics: Handmaiden of Inspired Truth,” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, August 1972; Richard J Walton, *Cold War and Counterrevolution: the Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy*, Penguin, 1973.

2 Precedents

- [1](#). For example, the outstanding study *Israel, La fin des mythes* (Albin Michel, 1975) by Amnon Kapeliouk, an Israeli journalist who is a regular correspondent for *Le Monde*, which was unable to find a U.S. publisher; or *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977) by David Hirst of the *Manchester Guardian*, published in the United States but virtually ignored. There are many other cases.
- [2](#). Isaiah Berlin, “The Bent Twig,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1972. Though the context suggests that he was referring to the statist intelligentsia of “the left,” the term and accompanying analysis apply quite generally. See N. Chomsky, *Intellectuals and the State*, for some discussion of the typical role of those who Bakunin called “the new class” a century ago—a concept that is periodically rediscovered and distorted in ways appropriate to contemporary ideology.
- [3](#). William Harper and James Henry Hammond, quoted in Drew Gilpin Faust, “A Southern Stewardship: The Intellectual and the Proslavery Argument,” *American Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- [4](#). H.C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914-17*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1939, pp. 29, 175-76. See also Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime*, Dutton, 1928. Compare the record of popular attitudes toward the U.S. war in Vietnam, which shows a somewhat similar pattern. See Bruce Andrews,

Public Constraint and American Policy in Vietnam, SAGE Publications, International Studies Series, vol. 4, 1976; Andrews observes, however, that popular “pacifism” was often of the “win or get out” variety.

5. James Morgan Read, *Atrocity Propaganda: 1914-1919*, Yale, 1941, p. 201. The following account relies on Read’s judicious study, from which the quotes are taken; pp. 201ff.
6. On the problems of obtaining an accurate record from refugees, given their generally dependent and vulnerable position, see Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, pp. 240-41, a discussion of refugee reports of U.S. atrocities in Laos. (See also Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.4, and the discussion in chapter 6 below.)
7. “Who Willed American Participation,” *New Republic*, 14 April 1917, cited in Clarence Karier, “Making the World Safe for Democracy: An Historical Critique of John Dewey’s Pragmatic Liberal Philosophy in the Warfare State,” *Educational Theory*, Winter, 1977.
8. Cf. Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America*, Louisiana State University Press, 1975, pp. 128f., 151f. The practice continues. A case recently exposed by the Senate Committee on Intelligence involves the Penkovsky Papers, actually “prepared and written by witting Agency assets who drew on actual case materials” and “sold to a publisher through a trust fund established for the purpose,” the publisher remaining “unaware of any U.S. Government interest.” Cited from the Senate report by Stephen S. Rosenfeld, *Washington Post* (30 April 1976). Rosenfeld was expelled from Moscow in protest over publication of the CIA fabrication in the *Post*. The Russians alleged—correctly, as we now discover—that the book was a “coarse fraud, a mixture of provocative invention and anti-Soviet slander” (Rosenfeld). The book’s “editor,” Frank Gibney, pledged that proceeds would go to a fund “to further the cause of genuine peace and friendship between the American and Russian peoples,” which must have caused a few laughs in CIA and KGB circles.
9. See Volume I, chapter 5, section 2.2. What is remarkable is not so much that Chi’s account was believed at the time, but that belief persists even after the exposures, as we discussed. See particularly note 168, discussing Guenter Lewy’s parody of scholarship. In this case, the intelligence fabrications may well have deluded the CIA as well. Snepp, who is described on the jacket of his book as “the agency’s principal analyst of North Vietnamese political affairs,” refers to “some 30,000 to 50,000 intransigent

peasants and landowners...killed or imprisoned” in the land reform program of the mid-1950s (p. 354). The fact that he offers one of the more restrained estimates suggests, however, that he may be continuing to purvey the myth, rather than expressing his belief in it. Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval*, Random House, 1977.

10. *Portrait of a Cold Warrior*, Putnam, 1976. A defense of the CIA, the book is not devoted to an exposure of its practices. Nevertheless, it contains much of interest, including an account of electoral manipulation in the Philippines, the anti-Castro crusade (which, he claims, was being escalated by Kennedy just before his death but was reduced in scale by Johnson), and other matters. As for the more humanitarian aspects of U.S. policy, Smith concludes that “despite the idealistic Alianza para el Progreso prattle, U.S. policy and CIA activities in Latin America were shaped by U.S. business interests and investments.” This conclusion, produced in reference to the CIA’s role in putting Frei into office in Chile in 1964, is interesting because of its source, though hardly novel. (See also Volume I, chapter 2, note 38.)
11. Cf. Volume I, chapter 5, sections 2.2, 2.3.
12. See, for example, John K. Fairbank, “Our Vietnam tragedy,” *Newsletter*, Harvard Graduate Society for Advanced Study and Research, June 1975. He writes that “a factor of ignorance” lies at the source of “our Vietnam tragedy.” We did not realize that the Vietnamese revolution was “inspired by the sentiment of nationalism” and we misguidedly “embarked on an anti-nationalist effort,” and later misconceived “our role in defending the South after 1965,” conceiving it as aimed at blocking aggression from North Vietnam and “forestalling a southward expansion of Chinese Communism.” A judicious scholar, he also remarks that our “greatly accelerating the urbanization of Vietnam” after 1965 was “not necessarily to our credit or to the benefit of the South Vietnamese,” referring to the policy of bombing the population into the cities to destroy the rural society and thus deprive the NLF of its support. See also Edwin O. Reischauer (“Back to Normalcy,” *Foreign Policy*, Fall, 1975), who also claims that the U.S. government was unaware of the nationalist character of the Viet Minh and its successors: “The real lesson of the Vietnam war is the tremendous cost of attempting to control the destiny of a South-east Asian country against the cross-currents of nationalism”—the cost to us, that is. To thoroughly appreciate the character of this historical nonsense (putting aside its moral level), one must recognize that Fairbank and Reischauer are the “deans” of Asian scholarship, with solid liberal credentials.
13. Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, pp. 51f., and for the relevant background, the

references of chapter 1, note 18 of this volume.

[14.](#) Cf. note 9, this chapter; also chapter 1, note 12.

[15.](#) This phrase is the propaganda term, invariably applied by the press and scholarship, to the client regime installed by the United States in South Vietnam; useful in its implication of a positive connection with the population rather than the actuality of a minority instrument of a foreign power.

[16.](#) On occasion, alert reporters commented on the fabrications. For example, Daniel Southerland cabled from Saigon “that so far he has been unable to verify reports of executions of officials and others in occupied areas. Mr. Southerland does report cables from the U.S. embassy in Saigon to Washington reporting alleged executions, but says one monk supposed to be an eyewitness is nowhere to be found. Another alleged eyewitness in Da Nang told Mr. Southerland he had seen no such thing. The embassy’s cables have the apparent aim of persuading Congress to vote more aid, Mr. Southerland reports.” Interpolated in Godfrey Sperling Jr., “Will Saigon become election issue?” *Christian Science Monitor* (21 April 1975).

[17.](#) Snepp, *op. cit.* pp. 301f. This operation, in which Britain and Australia also played a part, was described by Richard West as a “nauseating charade...this sudden concern for orphans is the most disgusting sham I have witnessed in nine years in Vietnam” (*New Statesmen*, 11 April 1975). Martin Woollacott described it as “one of the most hideous aspects of these last days of Saigon—the way in which children are suddenly being used as a propaganda weapon...the orphanages of Saigon are now being scoured by people whose only purpose is to make some kind of capital out of the present situation” (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 12 April 1975). The Vatican accused the United States “of engaging in international kidnapping, abusing the children for propagandistic purposes and engaging in a national ‘guilt trip’ to compensate for America’s role in Southeast Asia” (*New York Times*, 13 April 1975). A group of Buddhist orphanages denounced the “exploitation of the orphans for political aims”; the airlift “has stirred great sympathy among Americans but it has raised a storm of protest in Vietnam itself” (Daniel Southerland, *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 April 1975). The Red Cross condemned the operation as contrary to the Geneva conventions and the Buddhist An Quang Pagoda called it “a shameful act” (*Washington Post*, 10 April 1975). Many non-Communists in Saigon called it “a ‘criminal act’ akin to kidnapping,” while the effort of the *Daily Mail* (London) “to get in on the orphan act” by rounding up orphans was called “a grotesque stunt” (H.D.S. Greenway, *Washington Post*, 15 April 1978). “...

most Vietnamese reacted with anger at the American babylift last week” while Deputy Prime Minister Phan Quang Dan admitted that “it was a good way to get sympathy for additional American aid to Vietnam,” noting that Ambassador Martin had “intervened personally” to send the orphans abroad so as to “help swing American public opinion to the advantage of the Republic of Vietnam” (Fox Butterfield, *New York Times*, 13 April 1975). Jane Barton, a Vietnamese-speaking staff worker of the AFSC, interviewed children who said that they were not orphans but had been separated from their parents in refugee camps and then flown to the United States. They reported that families were arbitrarily broken up with children sent to different countries; in three visits to orphans arriving in San Francisco she did not meet one child who had lost both parents (AFSC report, 14 April 1975). Desmond Smith, director of CBC TV in Montreal, described the “body snatching” as perhaps the most “revolting” act yet in the war. He quotes a Canadian relief worker who describes it as “like getting meat in a meat market.” He points out further that up to two months before it “was not fashionable” to save real orphans, and also discusses the disgusting spectacle of Americans who would not dream of saving an orphan from a U.S. ghetto or a Calcutta slum but who now just must have a Vietnamese child kidnapped from Saigon: “The final indignity for the Vietnamese is that after we have bombed, strafed, napalmed and maimed half the population, we now take their children from them” (*Nation*, 19 April 1975). The actual evacuation was described by a doctor aboard the chartered Pan-Am aircraft as “the most incredible scene of deprivation and illness I’ve ever seen.” Children suffered from dehydration, pneumonia, diarrhea and viral disease, while staff members on the aircraft were running out of liquids to treat dehydration cases (Douglas Kneeland, *New York Times*, 7 April 1975). A year later, the *Washington Post* reported (25 April 1976) that only nine of over 2,000 “orphans” had been legally adopted, because it turned out that perhaps 2/3 are not orphans (*Nation*, 8 May 1976). In a San Francisco court, court-appointed experts testified that 18 of 25 randomly selected “babylift” children were illegally removed from Vietnam by private adoption agencies, many with parents who had signed no release. Sixty-nine are being given a fundamentalist Christian upbringing in a Baptist church where the pastor refuses repatriation to their parents because “Vietnam is communist now” (Liberation News Service, *Guardian*, New York, 26 November 1975). See also, Richard Flaste, *New York Times* (9 April 1975); Judith Coburn, “The War of the Babies,” *Village Voice* (14 April 1975); Gloria Emerson, “Operation Babylift,” *New Republic*, 26 April 1975. Among the more sordid scenes in this squalid affair was the sight of President Ford tearfully welcoming “orphans” and

Hugh Hefner's "Big Bunny" flying 40 orphans to the United States to be carried off the plane by Playboy bunnies (*Washington Post*, 10 April 1975).

18. The *Times* refused to open its letters column to comments on this interesting gambit, though it published quite a wide range of responses to the editorial, including even a call for nuclear war. One letter that was not published, our own, read as follows:

An editorial in the *Times*, April 5, observes that "a decade of fierce polemics has failed to resolve this ongoing quarrel" between two contending views: that "the war to preserve a non-Communist, independent South Vietnam could have been waged differently," and that "a viable, non-Communist South Vietnam was always a myth." There has also been a third position: That apart from its prospects for success, the United States has neither the authority nor competence to intervene in the internal affairs of Vietnam. This was the position of much of the authentic peace movement, that is, those who opposed the war because it was wrong, not merely because it was unsuccessful. It is regrettable that this position is not even a contender in the debate, as the *Times* sees it.

On a facing page, Donald Kirk observes that "since the term 'bloodbath' first came into vogue in the Indochinese conflict, no one seems to have applied it to the war itself—only to the possible consequences of ending the war." He is quite wrong. Many Americans involved in the authentic peace movement have insisted for years on the elementary point that he believes has been noticed by "no one," and it is a commonplace in literature on the war. To mention just one example, we have written a small book on the subject (*Counter-revolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda*, 1973), though in this case the corporation (Warner Brothers) that owned the publisher refused to permit distribution after publication. But quite apart from this, the observation has been made repeatedly in discussion and literature on the war, by just that segment of opinion that the *Times* editorial excludes from the debate.

19. Among the most persuasive examples of the subservience of the press are those that it regards as its proudest moments; e.g., Watergate, a fact that is obvious enough if one looks just a bit below the surface. See Chomsky, introduction to Blackstock, ed., *op. cit.* (see chapter 1, footnote 34); Chomsky, "Nixon's defenders do have a case," *More*, December 1975.
20. Peter Braestrup, *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington*, 2 volumes, Praeger, 1977.
21. See the entry for Freedom House in E.S. Herman, *Great Society Dictionary*, Philadelphia, 1968: "A small fabricator of credibility; a wholly-owned subsidiary of the White House." (See Volume I, chapter 4, section 1, for an example of Freedom House's devotion to freedom.)
22. Braestrup succeeds in portraying the media as unduly "pessimistic" by extensive fabrication of evidence and misrepresentation of his own documents, as is shown in detail in N. Chomsky, "The U.S. Media and the Tet Offensive," *Race and Class*, XX, 1978; large parts appear in *More*, June 1978. See the same review for documentation on the subjects of this paragraph. Reviews and comment in the *New York Times* and

Washington Post lauded this incompetent and hopelessly inaccurate work as “one of the major pieces of investigative reporting and first-rate scholarship of the past quarter century,” a “conscientious” and “painstakingly thorough study,” etc.

- [23.](#) Cf. Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, Pantheon, 1978, pp. 236f. Ienaga’s book is primarily a critique of Japanese fascism, aggression and atrocities. His documentation of crimes of the U.S. occupying army has yet to be mentioned in a review in the United States, to our knowledge. In the U.S. colony in the Philippines, meanwhile, the United States was engaged in dismantling the popular peasant-based anti-Japanese resistance and restoring to power the wealthy elites that collaborated successively with the U.S. occupiers, the Japanese, and then again the United States. In the course of these operations, U.S. military forces took part in a massacre of 109 peasant guerrillas who were rounded up, ordered to dig a mass grave, then shot “with the knowledge and consent of American [Counterintelligence Corps] officers present at the time.” The perpetrator of the massacre was then appointed mayor by the United States. Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, University of California Press, 1977, p. 113, a valuable study of the origins of the Huk rebellion in peasant discontent intensified by U.S. colonialism, suppressed with the aid of U.S. military intelligence headed by Major Lansdale, later of Vietnam fame, regarded in the United States as a deep thinker with great insight into the peasant mind but in fact a typical colonialist fantasy-monger. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 147, for an example.
- [24.](#) Richard H. Minnear, *Victor’s Justice: the Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, Princeton, 1971, p. 6.
- [25.](#) Cf. Adolph Frank Reel, *The Case of General Yamashita*, Chicago, 1949.
- [26.](#) Report to President Roosevelt, cited by Minnear, p. 16.
- [27.](#) Judgment of the Tokyo Tribunal, cited by Minnear, p. 199. (See also p. 72.)
- [28.](#) Cited by Minnear, p. 54. For further discussion of Pal’s dissent, and the moral ambiguities of the Pacific war, cf. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, chapter 2. Pal, incidentally, was the only Justice at Tokyo with any background in international law, and the only Justice who dissented from the entire judgment.
- [29.](#) For details, see Stephen Salaff, “The Diary and the Cenotaph: Racial and Atomic Fever in the Canadian Record,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, April-June 1978. The racist sentence was concealed until the lapse of a 30-year prohibition on the publication of secret government papers. The example illustrates rather well what is

often considered “a state secret.” On the racism of Western leaders during World War II, see Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, Oxford, 1978. One wonders how Canadian (or Western) historians will deal with a comparable revelation concerning Prime Minister Lester Pearson, who is highly regarded in the West for his humanism. In released but unpublished sections of the *Pentagon Papers* it is revealed that Pearson was approached by the U.S. government in mid-1964 when the bombing of North Vietnam was under close consideration in the hope that the DRV might exert its influence to restrain the southern forces that were preventing the U.S. conquest of the South. The Nobel Peace Prize winner replied that nuclear weapons would be excessive, but conventional bombing would be quite legitimate. On the Canadian record of support for the United States in Indochina, see Claire Culhane, *Why is Canada in Vietnam?*, NC Press, Toronto, 1972; D.R. SarDesai, *Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam*, California, 1968.

[30.](#) Salaff, *op. cit.*

[31.](#) Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam: an American Tragedy*. Quadrangle, 1970. For discussion, see Chomsky, “The rule of force in international affairs,” *Yale Law Journal*, vol. 80, no. 7, June 1971; reprinted with revisions in *For Reasons of State*.

[32.](#) Nuremberg Charter, cited by Minnear, p. 94; emphasis added.

[33.](#) *The Present State of Denazification*, reprinted in Constantine Fitzgibbon, *Denazification*, Norton, 1969, p. 133. These figures exclude war criminals. Directors of the great corporations who took part in Hitler’s atrocities, however, received only light sentences (while the U.S. corporations that aided them during the prewar period were, naturally, entirely exempted), and some later became respected figures in the German “economic miracle.” See Joseph Borkin, *The Crime and Punishment of I.G. Farben*, Free Press, 1978.

[34.](#) Data and quotes from Henry Faulk, *Group Captives: The Re-education of German Prisoners of War in Britain, 1945-1948*, Chatto & Windus, 1977, pp. 17, 32, 35, 47, 65, 69. The ultimate release of the POWs was impelled in part by a campaign by the same British groups that later opposed nuclear weapons and the war against Vietnam. Cf. Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, Allison & Busby, 1971, p. 20. In addition to Germans there were also Italian POWs, not discussed in Faulk’s study.

[35.](#) Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, p. 326.

- [36.](#) Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: USA*, Crowell, 1977, p. vii.
- [37.](#) Pp. 14f, 43. In explaining the importance of her study, Gansberg notes that except for “horrible atrocities” such as “the inhumanity of the North Vietnamese,” war prisoners are usually forgotten when war ends (p. 14). It does not occur to her, apparently, that the treatment of German POWs in the United States was hardly a model of humanity as she describes it, even putting aside the fact that the U.S. pilots were shot down while destroying towns and villages in North Vietnam, which was not exactly parallel to the case of the German POWs in the United States.
- [38.](#) Robert Aron, *France Reborn*, The History of the Liberation, Scribner’s 1964; chapter V: “The Summary Executions,” pp. 417-24. Translated from the French original.
- [39.](#) John Ehrman, *History of the Second World War*, Grand Strategy V, London, 1956, pp. 330ff.
- [40.](#) *Boston Globe* (19 October 1977). Defeated Japan “condemned the show attack as being in bad taste and offensive to the Japanese people the preceding year, according to this 20-line report, but to no effect.
- [41.](#) Bernard Crick, “On Rereading [Hannah Arendt’s] *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,” *Social Research*, Spring 1977, citing G. M. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*, Ronald Press, 1950, p. 246.
- [42.](#) It is a tribute to the effectiveness of U.S. propaganda that the question could even be raised, given the transparent absurdity of the U.S. claim. The American revolutionary war, Fall wrote, “entirely fits the bill of the many revolutionary wars which afflict the middle of the twentieth century...it was a military operation fought by a very small armed minority—at almost no time did Washington’s forces exceed 8,000 men in a country which had at least 300,000 able-bodied males—and backed by a force of 31,897 French ground troops, and 12,660 sailors and Marines manning sixty-one major vessels.” *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 276. For some further discussion of analogies between the American revolution and “modern revolutionary wars in Indochina and elsewhere,” see John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 196f. Shy is a military historian. This essay resulted from a Pentagon-sponsored project on “Isolating the Guerrilla” from his civilian supporters, about which Shy writes that he was “skeptical.”
- [43.](#) Carl Van Doren, *The Secret History of the American Revolution*, Viking, 1941, p. vi.
- [44.](#) Claude Halstead van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution*, MacMillan,

1902, p. 105. (Reprinted, Peter Smith, 1929; quotes from this edition).

45. Shy, *op. cit.*, p. 184, citing Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Princeton, 1959-65, I, 188-190. He also notes Palmer's suggestion "that, measured by the relative numbers of refugees from revolution, the American may have been as violently intolerant as the French."
46. Shy, *op. cit.*, citing Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, XXV (1968), pp. 259-77. Another standard reference is John Adams's estimate that 1/3 of the population supported the revolution, 1/3 opposed it, and 1/3 were neutral (Shy, 166). Shy's own analysis leads him to the conclusion that "almost certainly a majority of the population, [the great middle group of Americans] were the people who were dubious, afraid, uncertain, indecisive" and unwilling to risk the hazards and suffering of revolutionary struggle; "the prudent, politically apathetic majority of white American males was not eager to serve actively in the militia" (pp. 215, 217).
47. "At first divided and vacillating, the bulk of the Indians were eventually driven by events to fight for their 'ancient protector and friend' the king of England" (Francis Jennings, "The Indians' Revolution," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976, p. 341). He explains why in vivid detail, concluding that "heedless of theories, Americans began the building of their empire with an inheritance of ethnocentric semantics that made logic valid to themselves out of the strange proposition that invasion, conquest, and dispossession of other peoples support the principle that all men are created equal" (p. 344).

The same curious logic, with regard to Blacks, was noted by Samuel Johnson, who asked: "How is it that we hear the loudest *yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?*" Cited by Ira Berlin, "The revolution in black life," in Young, ed., *ibid.*, p. 356, an essay devoted to the Black response to the revolution. (See footnote 51, this chapter.)

48. See Ronald Hoffman, "The 'Disaffected' in the Revolutionary South," in Young, ed., *ibid.*
49. Benjamin Franklin, "after recounting the atrocities of the French and Indian wars,... called for the 'extirpation' of the French in Canada because of their manifold wickedness" (Shy, 238). Later, colonists raised an outcry against a 1774 act of the

British Parliament concerning Quebec, stressing “the horrors of ‘Papacy,’ because it permitted Canada’s Catholics to worship without disturbance” (Jennings, *op. cit.*, p. 339). “After the battles of Lexington and Concord,” Jennings continues, “the Second Constitutional Congress made an address to ‘the oppressed inhabitants of Canada,’ in which the Congress ‘perceived the fate of the protestant and catholic colonies to be strongly linked together’—so much for the popish menace—and appealed to the Canadians to overthrow the yoke of their ‘present form of tyranny.’ A few months later, the Congress’s armies invaded Quebec to confer the boon of liberty upon those poor, deserving Catholics” (340).

50. Kamm is the reporter assigned by the *New York Times* to record the misery of those who escape from postwar Indochina. We return to his reporting below. Compare his rather different approach to refugees in Timor from U.S.-backed Indonesian terror. (Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.4).
51. Though not as familiar as it should be, the treatment of Blacks and Indians after the war of independence is well enough known so that we need not recount it here. Recall that the first emancipation proclamation applying to American slaves was issued by the British in November, 1775, offering to free “all indentured servants, Negroes or others...able and willing to bear arms...” A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, Oxford, 1978; excerpts in the *Washington Post* (21 May 1978). Slaveholders, in response, urged slaves to “be content with their situation, and expect a better condition in the next world.” Small wonder that thousands of Blacks joined the British forces, and “when the British left America at the end of the war, they carried thousands of blacks to freedom in Great Britain, the West Indies, Canada, and, eventually, Africa.” (Berlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-55.)

An early draft of the American Declaration of Independence contained a condemnation of the slave trade, but this was deleted “in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia” (Jefferson). The British ridiculed the colonists for their protest against their alleged “enslavement” to England—their constant claim that “we are slaves” under British oppression (Josiah Quincy, and many others); see footnote 47. The rhetoric of the American revolutionaries was, however, used effectively by the abolitionists and others in later years. See Higginbotham, *op. cit.* Now a federal judge, Higginbotham was first impelled to study this subject, he writes, as a college student when his protest over the refusal to allow Black students to live in campus dormitories at Purdue University was met by the following response by President Edward Charles

Elliott: “Higginbotham, the law doesn’t require us to let colored students in the dorm, and you either accept things as they are or leave the university immediately.” But in fairness we must add that this was, after all, only 160 years after liberation. Matters have since improved, as a result of the courageous struggles of Blacks in the 1950s and 1960s, but it is still possible for the state to murder Black leaders with impunity and imprison civil rights activists for long periods, with no public outcry and (in the latter case) no interest on the part of President Carter, whose concern for human rights looks selectively outward. See references of chapter 1, footnote 34 and Chomsky, ‘*Human Rights*’ and *American Foreign Policy*, pp. 69f.

52. Clarence J. Karier, Review of Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education*, Basic Books, 1977; *Paedagogica Historica*, XVII/2, 1977 (Netherlands).

3 Refugees: Indochina and Beyond

1. 17 June 1978. The Laotians are largely Hmong Tribemen, organized by the CIA to fight against the Pathet Lao and then abandoned when they were no longer needed. (See chapter 1, section 1; and chapter 5.) By the end of the 1975-1978 period under review in this volume, the total number of refugees from Indochina remaining in Asia was estimated to be 333,500, including 150,000 refugees from Cambodia in Vietnam. Another 130,000 had been resettled in the United States, France, and elsewhere. These figures do not include the 135,000 airlifted from Vietnam by the United States in April 1975. Cited from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the *Los Angeles Times*, 8 January 1979. On the causes of the accelerated flight of refugees from Vietnam in mid and late 1978, see the preface to this volume.
2. The reference is presumably to East Asia.
3. Among them are some 250,000 refugees from Zaire prior to the invasion of May, 1978, according to the UN High Commissioner for refugees, “mostly farmers who had arrived empty handed,” in some cases whole villages. “The Cold War in Africa,” *Peace Press*, London, July/August/September, 1978. The same report cites the observation of a Belgian refugee in the *London Guardian* (22 May 1978): “What the government troops did to the population down here after [the arrival of the Moroccan troops flown in by the French to expel the Katangese rebels in May 1978] was unbelievable. One whole village was massacred. Even the Moroccans...were disgusted.” President Mobutu of Zaire, maintained in power by French, Belgian and Moroccan forces backed by the United States, offered an amnesty to exiles from his rule. “Mobutu offers

Amnesty to 200,000 Refugees,” *Washington Post* (25 June 1978). Upon their return, many thousands of these refugees were taken to detention centers, where they were subjected to interrogation and frequent beatings, all in “flagrant violations of the amnesty,” according to international officials on the scene. John Darnton, “Zaire Is Reported to Violate Shaba Refugees’ Amnesty,” *New York Times* (5 February 1979).

4. William Mattern, “Refugees: Burma’s brand of apartheid,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 July 1978.
5. Maurice Lafite, “Still in fear of the dragon,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 November 1978. In a rare reference to the flight of refugees from Burma, the *Christian Science Monitor* carried a Reuters dispatch from Bangladesh (16 November 1978) reporting that more than 5,000 of the Burmese Muslim refugees had been repatriated, though 190,000 “were still living in 13 improvised camps set up by the Bangladesh Government,” according to UN officials. In December 1978, one of the torrent of articles on refugees from Indochina then appearing mentioned the “bizarre tale of almost 200,000 Moslems who fled last May from Burma to Bangladesh ...” Richard M. Weintraub, “Asia’s Refugees: A New Wave of Human Migration,” *Washington Post*, 12 December 1978, the second of two long articles; most of the article was devoted to the refugees from Indochina, as was (in its entirety) the first article of the series the preceding day and a second article that also appeared on December 12. A third article on December 12 noted that at the UN meeting in Geneva devoted to “the Indochina refugee problem,” the U.S. government “called on governments around the world today to provide homes for the flood of Indochinese refugees.”
6. See Volume I, chapter 4, section 1. In mid-July, China estimated the number of ethnic Chinese who fled Vietnam to China at 140,000. *New York Times* (15 July 1978). Later reports are higher; it seems that most ethnic Chinese were fleeing not to China but elsewhere in late 1978. Most of the increasing number of “boat people” in late 1978 are reported to be Chinese.
7. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 August 1977. See also *FEER*, 12 May 1978, citing reports that “Filipino refugees [to Sabah] are being turned back to their troubled homeland.”
8. Peter Weintraub, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 December 1977. Compare the London *Economist* report of class backgrounds noted above. An analysis from Australia points out that there are many “doubts about identity” of refugees. A Catholic relief worker notes that “there have been white collar workers, public

servants as well as army officers, who have said they were fishermen.” The Laotian and Cambodian refugees “come from a higher class, representing the ‘finest families imaginable,’” according to Berenice Lenze of the Indochinese Refugee Association. A large proportion of the refugees are Chinese—few of the Vietnamese who arrived even spoke Vietnamese. *National Times (Australia)*, week ending 10 June 1978.

9. Frederic A. Moritz, “The other refugees in Asia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 March 1978. By “other” the *Monitor* means: “other than boat people”; not refugees from areas in Asia other than Indochina.
10. See Jonathan C. Randal, *Washington Post* (20 March 1978). These are useful weapons against such targets as the Rashidiyeh Palestinian refugee camp, where “hours after the raid, an Israeli helicopter flew over the camp south of Tyre no more than 20 feet off the ground and was not fired upon” (Randal). The Israeli use of CBUs aroused some mild protest in the United States, presumably, on the grounds that only the United States has the right to use such weapons against defenseless people.
11. H.D.S. Greenway, “Vietnam style raids gut South Lebanon,” *Washington Post* (25 March 1978). Interviewed in Israel about the attacks on the civilian population, Israeli Chief-of-Staff Mordechai Gur commented that these were nothing new: “For 30 years, from the War of Independence until today, we have been fighting against a population that lives in villages and cities.” *Al-Hamishmar* (10 May 1978).
12. *Maariv*, 16 May 1978. This emigration is important for Israel because of the “demographic problem” posed by the presence of Arabs in a Jewish state, a very substantial minority given the intention since 1967 to maintain control of large parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Much of the “emigration” is far from voluntary.
13. Jean-Pierre Clerc, *Le Monde* (3 November 1978); Pierre Simonitsch, *Tages Anzeiger* (Switzerland), 13 October 1978, citing official Costa Rican estimates that 10,000 refugees fled to Costa Rica in September joining 100,000 Nicaraguan refugees already in this country of two million people. The estimate for Honduras is about 8,000 refugees in September. Clerc writes that the refugees who fled to Costa Rica had to escape through barbed wire laid by Nicaraguan armed forces and that those in Honduras are suffering severe deprivation despite assistance from Austria.
14. “U.N. Seeks Solution for ‘Boat People,’” *New York Times* (11 November 1978).
15. Richard Holbrooke, address excerpted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, (20 December 1978).

- [16.](#) Ira Gollobin, “Asylum for ‘boat people,’” *Rights* (newsletter of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, March/June 1978). Gollobin is General Counsel for the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born and now Counsel for the National Council of Churches in the Haitian refugee case.
- [17.](#) For recent discussion of the U.S.-Haiti relationship, see Wendell Rawls, Jr., “‘Baby Doc’s’ Haitian Terror,” *New York Times Magazine* (14 May 1978).
- [18.](#) Jon Nordheimer, “Illegal Tide of Haitians Arriving on U.S. Shore,” *New York Times* (18 July 1978). The report was occasioned by the arrival of 33 “boat people” who were “rounded up by the police.” It claims that Haitian “boat people” are no longer imprisoned and that “confusion over the changing regulations, meanwhile, has slowed down the deportation of Haitians unable to show that they were political refugees *from a country with friendly ties with the United States*” (*our emphasis*), always the crucial consideration.
- [19.](#) Robert M. Press, “U.S. crackdown seeks to bar fleeing Haitians,” *Christian Science Monitor* (29 August 1978).
- [20.](#) 2,000 people attended a funeral in the Bahamas for 23 refugees who died at sea fleeing to Florida to avoid deportation to Haiti. *Militant* (1 September 1978), which also carries a report of a demonstration in Miami protesting “racist attacks” against Haitian refugees. The mainstream press rarely carries such news.
- [21.](#) The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service works in an interesting fashion. Its timing in the expulsion of victims of friendly tyrannies, for example, has a curious way of coinciding with union organizing. Thus in September, 1978, a group of Haitian custodians were arrested by INS just a day before contract negotiations for custodians were to begin. “The negotiations are now up in the air,” Martha Cooley reports; “I-Men Raid Quincy Market for Illegal Aliens, Impede Union Drives,” *Real Paper*, Cambridge (14 October 1978). This is one example of a pattern described in the article, mere coincidence according to INS.
- [22.](#) News conference, March 24, 1977; reprinted in the *New York Times*, March 25 without comment. Carter was asked by a CBS newsman whether the United States “has a moral obligation to help rebuild Vietnam.” At first he evaded the question. When it was reiterated he gave this response: we have no obligation because “the destruction was mutual.” Since “we went to Vietnam without any desire...to impose American will on other people” but only “to defend the freedom of the South Vietnamese,” there is no

reason for us “to apologize or to castigate ourselves or to assume the status of culpability.” Nor do we “owe a debt.” One learns a good deal about the United States—indeed, the Free World—from the fact that such a statement made by the apostle of Human Rights can pass without notice.

[23.](#) See Volume I, chapter 1, section 16.

[24.](#) *Christian Science Monitor* (18 April 1978).

[25.](#) The advisory board overturned the jury nominations in 5 of 10 cases. The others are also interesting. The prize for commentary went to William Safire, the extreme rightwing commentator of the *New York Times*, who was not even a finalist. The prize for editorial writing was awarded to Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post*, who has specialized in urging a renewal of a harsher cold war stance, again overruling the jury recommendation. We have already discussed Kamm’s first published article after he received the Pulitzer Prize, namely, his report from Jakarta on Timor (Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.4).

4 Vietnam

[1.](#) Recall the confident prediction of the editors of *Dissent* that *all of those who fought the Communists would be slaughtered—i.e. many millions of people—tacitly reiterated again in the spring of 1975*, but never specifically recalled since; see chapter 1 note 29. (See also Volume I, chapter 2, section 2.2.)

[2.](#) Cited from *Vietnam: If the Communists Won*, Saigon, Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations, 1972, in *The British Press and Vietnam*, Indochina Information No. 3; written by a group of working journalists in the British media and published by the Indochina Solidarity Conference, 1973, the source of the background on this authority.

[3.](#) *New York Times* (31 May 1978).

[4.](#) Presumably, the source for the Tass dispatch is the Vietnam Press Agency, 26 January 1978, giving official statistics of 260,000 montagnards in the South of a total of 800,000 who have been resettled. Nayan Chanda, “Le communisme vietnamien en marche,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, April 1978. Chanda, regular Southeast Asia correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, has been a perceptive commentator on affairs of the region for many years. His report of a visit to Vietnam in fact provides some basis for the claim made on purely *a priori* grounds in the *New York Times*. *Certain montagnard areas*, he writes, were closed to visits for security reasons,

apparently because of montagnard discontent over the resettlement policy and the institution of Vietnamese as a common language for the whole country.

5. Butterfield informed us that the wording in question was not his, but was added by “overly eager editing.” He apparently regards it as accurate, however, as we see directly.
6. Cf. *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Beacon, 1971, vol. II, section 2; Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation*, Delta, 1967, chapter 29, Milton Osborne, *Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam*, Cornell University, 1965. Dean Rusk claimed that almost half the population had been relocated by 1963; cited in Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, Dodd, Mead, p. 201. On the cynicism of liberal commentary on the strategic hamlet program, cf. Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, p. 106.
7. Dennis J. Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam*, Oxford, 1968, p. 321.
8. For these and further references, see *For Reasons of State*, pp. 80f.
9. Gerald Cannon Hickey, “The Lost Montagnards,” *New York Times*, Op-Ed, (16 August 1973).
10. Martin, *Reaching the Other Side*, Crown, 1978, pp. 165-166. Some of the montagnards did escape back to their home. Of the remainder, one-seventh died during the four months the Martins were working with them as relief workers in the camps.
11. But there have been protests, for example by the French anthropologist Georges Condominas, who worked with hill tribes that were virtually wiped out by U.S.-backed atrocities. (*We Have Eaten the Forest*, Allen Lane, 1977, introduction). In fact, the Vietnamese Communists seem to have a far better record than the various U.S.-imposed regimes in dealing with the hill tribes, and while many montagnards allied themselves with the United States (much as American Indians did with the British) because of fear of any Vietnamese, others fought with the Communists. For example, the capture of Ban Me Thuot, which began the final 1975 offensive, was reported by an escaped Catholic priest to have involved local montagnards but no North Vietnamese troops. Cf. *Washington Post* (15 March 1975), cited by Buttinger, *Vietnam: the Unforgettable Tragedy*, p. 150.
12. See Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, pp. 84f. for explicit recommendations on generating refugees, from the highest sources. See also pp. 5f. and elsewhere for relevant background.

- [13.](#) Butterfield states that the purposes of the resettlement program are “to relieve the major unemployment problem in parts of the south, to overcome chronic food shortages in the north by opening new farmland and to improve police control of the population by moving malcontent members of the bourgeoisie out of the cities.” He makes no reference to the “cost in human terms” of leaving millions of people to starve in the cities to which they were driven by U.S. programs of “forced-draft urbanization” and “modernization” (Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington’s euphemism for bombing the rural population into U.S.-controlled cities; cf. Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, pp. 54f.).
- [14.](#) Butterfield is, in fact, one of the more serious U.S. correspondents writing about Southeast Asia, and the *New York Times*, apart from its national stature, is perhaps on the liberal side of the narrow spectrum of the U.S. media. In the admittedly rather silly Freedom House study of the press discussed above, p. 34, the *Times* is described as an “antiwar journal.” See *Volume I*, chapter 2, note 101, for the consequences of its allegedly “leftist” positions, as perceived by U.S. business interests.
- [15.](#) Butterfield writes that “many highly trained and educated southerners, between 50,000 and 100,000, analysts estimate, remain imprisoned in so-called re-education camps.”
- [16.](#) Compare, in contrast, the behavior of the U.S. and Britain in detaining hundreds of thousands of German POWs in “reeducation camps” where they could be used for forced labor for up to three years after World War II, or the execution of hundreds of Japanese and massive purges in Japan and Germany, regarded as proof of Western humanitarianism. (See above, chapter 2, section 2.)
- [17.](#) See, among many other examples, Fox Butterfield, “Shortages, Misrule and Corruption Said to Plague Vietnam’s Economy,” *New York Times* (9 June 1978), (reporting, *inter alia*, a 10 to 12% rise in industrial production in each of the past two years; but this was “from a very low base, largely reflecting recovery from war damage rather than new growth,” analysts in Hong Kong believe); Peter Hazelhurst, “Old-style corruption begins to taint new regime in Saigon,” *London Times* (24 April 1978), describing how the daughter of “a wealthy Chinese jeweller” was able to purchase travel documents to escape through bribery, and the problems that face the formerly wealthy as the black market is suppressed.
- [18.](#) The United States is unlikely to attend to these lessons, for obvious reasons, but people who live in its neo-colonial domains may come to heed them, realizing the longstanding fears of U.S. planners with regard to the “ideological successes” of

Communist regimes, the rational version of the “domino theory.” See chapter 1, section 2, and the references cited there. It is interesting to compare the situation in the Caribbean. See, for example, Mike Phillips, “Cuba’s shifting image lends a new model to the Caribbean,” *New Statesman*, 18 April 1978. While in the West, Phillips comments, “Cuba is most often seen as a tool of Soviet policy and, as such, fatally discredited within its own sphere of influence,” in fact, “the reverse is very nearly true” and there is “a renewed pro-Fidel groundswell among Latin American nationalists,” not because of Castroite propaganda but rather because the effect of U.S. policies in Latin America is all too obvious to their victims while “Cuba now offers the Caribbean the choice between attempting to transform its own economies and continuing to accept the model of dependency,” with its “torture, poverty, the suppression of human rights, financial bankruptcy or the overall dependence (in most of the smaller countries) on the whims and necessities of foreign capital.” One can see the logic in the intensive but failed efforts of the United States to subvert Cuban social and economic development by poisoning food supplies, trying to assassinate Castro, terrorist attacks, etc. (See Volume I, chapter 2, note 94.)

[19.](#) *New York Times* (9 April 1978). The situation seems still worse in other nearby U.S. colonies, where Filipino workers have been murdered “under mysterious circumstances.” Few of the Filipino and Korean workers have been willing to report abuses for fear of deportation, since even under these conditions (“like slavery”) they “can usually make more in an hour than they could for a full day’s work, say, in Manila,” where workers benefit from the fruits of a U.S. humanitarian effort that began 80 years ago. Cf. Volume I, chapter 4, section 3. An ACLU observer on Guam states that immigration officers and the code they apply have given contractors and their agents “virtually total power over their workers, a licence to steal and beat the men without restraint,” while female immigrants, according to the labor department official cited, “have been forced to have sexual relations with immigration officers to keep from being deported.”

This report, a rare example of serious journalism, aroused no comment and quickly passed from memory.

[20.](#) *New York Times*, “Our Vietnam Duty is Not Over,” editorial (28 February 1978). See also “The Indochina debt that lingers,” editorial (15 April 1978) (cited above, chapter 3, p. 64).

[21.](#) David Anable, *Christian Science Monitor*, “UN Report says Vietnam needs rural

resettlement” (7 June 1976).

22. See also Patrice de Beer, *Le Monde* (26-28 January 1976), translated in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (11 July 1976): “It is realized in Saigon today that Operation Phoenix, conducted by the Americans, which involved the elimination of Communist Party officials, together with the bombings had been fearfully effective. The number of revolutionary cadres is said to have dropped from the 80,000 or so before the United States intervened to a maximum of 50,000 in 1975, most of them soldiers. Party cells were successively wiped out in the rural districts and decimated in the cities. At the beginning of the new regime, there were 5,000 militants in Saigon, of whom 2,000 were cadres, not necessarily the best, but those who had managed to survive Nguyen Van Thieu’s repression machine. ‘In the last few years of the war,’ Nguyen Huu Tho, the president of the Front, told me, ‘our activities declined because our comrades had been eliminated...The best of us were sacrificed, and we did not have enough cadres to run the cities after the liberation. We had to take people who had revolutionary fervour, but no experience, and to bring personnel down from the North.’” (See chapter 1, section 2, and Volume I, chapter 5, section 1.5.)
23. “Vietnam Communists Inter Once-Vital ‘Front’ Group,” *Washington Post* (5 February 1977), reprinted from the *Manchester Guardian*. Woollacott is unusual in that he recognized that “the Front was an enormous human achievement and a formidable instrument of war.”
24. Long An happens to be a particularly well-studied province because of the outstanding work of Jeffrey Race, who described Communist success there prior to the U.S. invasion of 1965. See further, Volume I, chapter 5.
25. For an eyewitness description of these regions today, see John Pilger, *op. cit.* (chapter 1, note 15).
26. See chapter 1, notes 9 and 12.
27. Cf. Martin Woollacott, “Vietnam: still two nations,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (25 April 1976). He writes that “South Vietnam now has, for the first time, something like a true health service.” He cites a Catholic sister who had worked in the Central Highlands for 20 years and “described with admiration how within weeks of taking over, the Communists had established clinics in every village and new 50-bed hospitals in the towns. People who previously had no chance of hospital treatment at all were now getting it.” See note 97. See also the report of the study mission to Vietnam by

Senator Edward Kennedy for comment on achievements of the health program and the enormous problems caused by lack of supplies and the legacy of the war.

Congressional Record, S 14007f., 22 August 1978. Also, Hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Ninety-Fifth Congress, second session, 22 August 1978, in which members of the study mission testified, reporting determined and in some cases encouraging efforts to meet health and nutrition problems despite deplorable conditions. Mildred Kaufman summarized what appears to be their general impression: "I was very impressed with the rather stark conditions under which the people of Vietnam are valiantly struggling to overcome the aftermath of the war" (p. 25).

Health care developments under the extremely onerous conditions of Indochina are especially interesting for the contrast with conditions under subfascism. We have discussed in Volume I the absolute decline of public health expenditures under the auspices of the Brazilian generals, and the similar disregard for the health conditions of the majority in the Philippines, Indonesia and elsewhere in the subfascist empire. We are awaiting a Butterfield-Kamm study comparing medical care in the countryside of Indochina with that in, say, Indonesia or South Vietnam under U.S. rule, taking into account both the facts and the resources available.

[28.](#) See chapter 1, note 15.

[29.](#) Richard Dudman, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 30, October 31, November 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 1977.

[30.](#) *Time* the same day quotes Secretary of Defense Harold Brown who explains that "a lesson we learned in Vietnam is that we should be very cautious about intervening in any place where there is a poor political base for our presence." *Time* (23 May 1977). If there is a good political base, as the Russians claim to have found in Czechoslovakia in 1968, then the use of massive U.S. force to destroy "local Communist subversion or rebellion that does not constitute armed attack" in violation of the supreme law of the land is, presumably, quite appropriate. (Cf. chapter 1, note 16).

[31.](#) Fox Butterfield, "Vietnam, 2 Years After War's End, Faces Painful Problems of Peace," *New York Times* (1 May 1977).

[32.](#) Butterfield follows standard Western practice in identifying southerners who hold key decision-making positions in the Hanoi regime as "northerners." That Vietnamese adhere to these imperialist conventions is perhaps open to question.

33. See the reports of Sney, Casella, de Beer, and Dudman cited above. “One possible factor behind the continued dominance of Northerners in the reunified Vietnam,” Butterfield speculates, “is that the old ethnic prejudices between Northerners and Southerners have persisted.” Another possible factor is that the United States decimated what it always recognized to be the only mass-based *political force in the South*, but this factor is not fit to print.
34. See also the AFP report carried by the *New York Times* (16 March 1978) on a road trip from Hanoi to Saigon which reveals “a startling new look to this country a little less than three years after the end of hostilities”—new construction, rice fields and coffee plantations, and homes that “have sprung up in areas that two years ago still resembled lunar landscapes,” in areas that were “like a desert because of the bombing.” The report continues: “Provincial authorities in the south reported large surpluses of rice but did not explain why the surplus had not been sent north.” No speculation on the reasons is offered.
35. A personal experience may be relevant. After a few days in Vientiane, one of us (Chomsky) was brought into contact with underground Pathet Lao cadres and sympathizers in the city, including a teacher in a Buddhist school (who was, shortly after, picked up by CIA agents), a guerrilla from northern Laos, and a minister in the U.S.-backed government who was hoping for a Pathet Lao victory. Cf. *At War With Asia*, chapter 4, where identities were concealed in the midst of the ongoing U.S. war. The attitudes of such people could barely have been known to readers of the Free Press, which also virtually ignored the hundreds of thousands of rural and urban poor, who are rarely considered when assessments of attitudes are given by Butterfield and others.
36. As contrasted with the hordes of Vietnamese correspondents freely roaming about the United States, which was never invaded and demolished by Vietnam. Even a Vietnamese nun visiting Canada was apparently denied entry into the United States. See Don Luce’s Congressional testimony in the Hearings to which we return (see note 70).
37. *New York Times* (20 September 1977). This ridiculous pretense was abandoned by the *Times* shortly after, with the publication of reports by Ian Mather (reprinted from the *London Observer*), October 13, 14, 18, 27, 1977; and Horst Faas, October 13, 16, November 13, 1977. As we will see in chapter 6, Kamm adopts a similar pretense in the case of Cambodia. In the case of East Timor, however, Indonesian officials are the principal source of information for the *Times* correspondent. See *Volume I*, chapter 3,

section 4.4.

[38.](#) Gabriel Kolko, personal communication.

[39.](#) Jean and Simonne Lacouture, *Vietnam: voyage à travers une victoire*, Seuil, 1976.

[40.](#) Ibid. pp. 182, 194. It should be added that Vietnam was “irremediably miserable” not because of God’s wrath, but as a direct result of the vicious practices of French colonialists, documented in painstaking detail by Ngo Vinh Long, *Peasant Revolutionary Struggles in Vietnam in the 1930s*, Harvard University Ph.D. Dissertation, May, 1978; see also his *Before the Revolution: the Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, MIT Press, 1973, which includes a revealing account of these years as seen by peasants themselves. The revolutionary struggles of the 1930s, as Long fully documents, were part of an impressive struggle for independence and democratic control of social life, intensified by the miserable conditions resulting from French rule which led to mass deaths from starvation in the 1930s, while the French (working in part through their local allies among landlords and village officials) compelled the starving peasants to purchase alcohol from their monopoly, withheld aid, prevented the rebuilding of dikes and wantonly murdered those who stood in their way. Now, Western reporters bewail the fact that Indochinese revolutionaries who studied in Paris failed to absorb the traditional “humanism” of Western civilization. See Martin Woollacott, *Boston Globe* (2 October 1977) excerpted from the *Manchester Guardian*.

[41.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Vietnam: idéologie révolutionnaire et pragmatisme économique,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, March 1977.

[42.](#) See above, chapter 3, note 22.

[43.](#) Like drug addiction, venereal disease was virtually unknown prior to the U.S. invasion. See Don Luce’s congressional testimony to which we return. We may note, in this connection, some recent concern in the United States over the fact that many war veterans appear to be developing symptoms associated with excessive use of defoliants. See, for example, *Boston Globe* (25 March, 8 October 1978); *New York Daily News* (11 June 1978). Notably missing from these reports is any concern for the possible effects on the Vietnamese, who were surely subject to far heavier doses, or for U.S. responsibility to offer them some medical assistance. On this matter see the comments by Arthur Galston, a plant physiologist at Yale University, in the private hearings cited in note 56. In the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 August 1978, Tom Grundfeld reports Galston’s conclusions on his return from the most recent of his many trips to

Vietnam. Apart from the ecological damage caused by bombing and chemical warfare, what particularly concerned him was the extensive use of herbicides containing dioxin, which causes cancer. “Galston said that liver cancer is now the second most common cause of death in Vietnam, where before the war it was rare.”

44. Recall again the interesting list of the sole violators of human rights that deserve such punishment by the U.S. guardians of global morality: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Mozambique, Angola—and Uganda, thrown in for good measure, and something of a joke, since the United States is “Uganda’s largest free world trading partner, buying one third of its coffee exports in 1977 (price tag: \$245 million) and thereby providing the hard currency essential to keeping Amin’s repressive regime in power.” Senator Lowell Weicker, “Stop subsidizing Amin’s murders,” *Christian Science Monitor* (21 August 1978). Coffee sales amount to over 85% of the government’s revenues, according to Weicker. Among the other current contributors to Idi Amin are “a mysterious Israeli tycoon and the Mossad, Israel’s intelligence service,” who “appear to have provided Idi Amin’s Uganda Airlines with its two Boeing 707 jetliners as part of an Israeli effort to spy on Libya,” an absurdity, since it is well known to the Libyans so that “nobody is fooling anybody in this affair,” though “Idi Amin must be delighted with a cut-rate service that transports Ugandan coffee, officials and their mistresses to Europe and brings back whiskey, machine tools, livestock, and Mercedes Benz limousines.” “But the big winner in this operation appears to be Shaul Eisenberg, the elusive Israeli entrepreneur at its center.” Eisenberg works in close collaboration with the Israeli Aircraft Industry, a subsidiary of the Israeli Defense Department; his trading firm is also supported by “the U.S. Export-Import Bank, which is supposed to make loans to promote American exports.” He is also “the sole beneficiary of what in Israel is called ‘the Eisenberg law’ [which] exempts from tax certain companies that do business abroad. So far, it fits only Eisenberg.” “Ugandan Plane Deal Believed Key to Israeli Spy Operation,” *Washington Post*, London (11 September 1978). Presumably the author is Bernard Nossiter; see his “How the CIA keeps Idi Amin in whiskey,” *New Statesman*, (13 October 1978), virtually the same article, but with the additional information on CIA involvement, or perhaps coordination.

45. *Fellowship*, December 1977.

46. Henry Kamm, “Vietnam Asks Help from Asian Bank, but Early Action is Held Unlikely,” *New York Times* (24 April 1977). The United States also cast a negative vote (as is the practice) when the World Bank approved a \$60 million loan for irrigation in

Vietnam. Cf. Jean Mayer's testimony in the August 22, 1978 Hearings cited above (note 27), p. 7.

- [47.](#) The cynical exploitation of the MIA issue by the United States merits little comment. Reporting on Carter's Commission to Hanoi to inquire into the MIA matter, the *Washington Post* sermonized that "it is ghoulish for the Vietnamese to trade on heartbreak," but we must understand that "the losses they themselves suffered—losses that they define as an American responsibility—left them with little else to trade" (how odd that they should define these losses as "an American responsibility"). But they can expect no more than "token direct assistance from Washington," given their human rights record, the *Post* explains. ("Vietnam Mission," *Washington Post*, 23 March 1971). Nayan Chanda ("Laying the MIA issue to rest," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 March 1977) reports the same story in a slightly different way. The report of the U.S. Select Committee on the Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, he writes, "clearly shows how Hanoi has been pressed to supply information about people lost in non-hostile circumstances, on the open sea and unknown to the Vietnamese authorities." The existence of such cases "erodes the credibility of the United States' data base...it may appear to the Indochinese leaders that the United States has deliberately requested information which they cannot furnish in order to embarrass them or to prevent meaningful talks" (quoted from the Committee reports).
- [48.](#) Cited by Nayan Chanda, "New Delhi wants to offer help," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 February 1977, another report that escaped the attention of the U.S. press.
- [49.](#) *Times of India*, July 10, 17, 24, 1977. Excerpts appear in *Atlas World Press Review*, October 1971.
- [50.](#) *Le Monde*, January 21-22, translated in the *Manchester Guardian* (8 February 1976).
- [51.](#) *Fraternité Vietnam* is a charitable organization founded by the Vietnamese community in Paris in March, 1975, functioning also in Canada; 18, rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 75005, Paris; 1040 Jean Dumetz, Ste-Foy, Quebec, G1W4K5. Apart from its aid projects for Vietnam, it has circulated considerable information on wartime and postwar Vietnam.
- [52.](#) He reports that he visited several parishes where he saw "with my own eyes that the Churches are full, with both young and old."
- [53.](#) Recall, for example, the AP report that accompanied Butterfield's 1977 survey.
- [54.](#) *New York Times* (13 March 1977).

55. The *Times* account asserts that Collett “said its members did not go to Vietnam on an inquisitorial mission to check on allegations of repression ...” but then quotes him as having inquired into repression.
56. The transcript appears in the *Congressional Record*, Senate, 29 March 1977.
57. *New York Times*, editorials of 28 February and 15 April 1978, cited above.
58. See *New England Peacework*, April, May, 1977. A detailed report is also available from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. A private account has also been circulated. Their reports and films are also discussed in Robert K. Musil, “Vietnam Today: Problems and Challenges,” *WIN*, 17 November 1977, along with reports by James Klassen and Don Luce (see below). *WIN*, published with the support of the War Resisters League, is unusual among U.S. journals in that it has been open to a wide range of reports, opinion, and discussions of postwar Indochina. It gives a rare insight into what a free press might be like, if such a phenomenon were to exist.
59. See Volume I, chapter 5, section 1.3.
60. “Meeting with Ngo Cong Duc, Ho Ngoc Nhuan and Ly Chanh Trung, 1 February 1977.” Ngo Cong Duc was a member of the Saigon Assembly until 1971. A Catholic and cousin of the Archbishop of Saigon, he was editor of *Tin Sang* until it was banned by Thieu and then escaped to Europe. He is now once again editing *Tin Sang*. Ho Ngoc Nhuan was a member of the Saigon Assembly. Ly Chanh Trung is a well-known Catholic intellectual. For a lengthy quote from a speech he delivered at the Saigon Student Center in 1968, see Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, pp. 65-66. Parts of the transcript appear in *Vietnam South East Asia International*, ICDP, 6 Endsleigh St., London WC 1, February-April, 1977.
61. In an interview with Richard Dudman, Duc “said that he had more freedom now than under the old government. He prints articles critical of the government and publishes translations of foreign affairs analyses from *Le Monde* of Paris, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The Thieu regime cut off his newsprint, confiscated his property and sentenced him to prison for doing that sort of thing.” He claims that there is no censorship, but adds: “I am a self-censor—I know what we should publish in the interests of the country and the Vietnamese people.” Such self-censorship can be equivalent to censorship, or worse (if accompanied by the delusion of freedom), as readers of the Free Press should be aware. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (2 November 1977).

- [62.](#) A statement that she gave to the Swedish delegation appears in *Vietnam South East Asia International*, op. cit.
- [63.](#) As antiwar activists have long been aware, there is a way for them to gain access to the Free Press—namely, when they take a position that happens to conform to the current needs of Western propaganda. This is one reason why some, at least, refused to participate in a public statement released to the U.S. press. For some discussion of the issues, see N. Chomsky, “Vietnam Protest and the Media,” *Resist Newsletter #112*, 1977.
- [64.](#) George McArthur, “Hanoi hints at reeducation’ scope; At least 110,000 South Vietnamese said to be in camps,” *Boston Globe—Los Angeles Times* (10 April 1977). We wrote to McArthur to inquire as to the source of the material to which he refers, but received no response. This is the same correspondent who informed his readers that the victims of the Indonesian massacre of 1965-66 had “subjected” Indonesia to the massacre. See Volume I, chapter 4, section 1.
- [65.](#) Martha Winnacker, “Recovering from Thirty Years of War,” *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, May-July 1977.
- [66.](#) James Klassen, “Religion in Viet Nam Today,” privately circulated by James Klassen, RR 2, Box 102A, Newton, Kansas 67114.
- [67.](#) Catholic missionaries have long been notorious for their role in colonial oppression. For example, during the peasant uprisings in 1930-1931 French priests led “pacification” teams. Others usurped communal land and brought soldiers to intimidate and kill resisting peasants. The heavily censored Saigon press in 1938 reported that the manager of an estate of a French Catholic priest closed canals that were the communication routes for peasants in the area and forced them to pay tolls or hand over possessions, resorting to savage beatings if they refused, with no action by the French authorities despite much publicity. Long, *Peasant Revolutionary Struggle* (pp. 50, 212, 225).

The dubious role of the Catholic Church during the war has been discussed in the *National Catholic Reporter*, a leading church weekly, after a year-long investigation of the Catholic Relief Services by its Washington correspondent, Richard Rashke. Rashke alleges that “during much of the Vietnam War, Catholic Relief Services abandoned its apolitical humanitarian role and became an adjunct of the American military effort,” turning over “vast quantities of relief supplies...to both U.S. and South Vietnamese

military units to be used as pay for irregular forces and incentives for intelligence gathering” and allowing U.S. military personnel to work in relief offices where they had access to “information valuable to military intelligence but possible disastrous to the Vietnamese civilians whom the organization was chartered to help.” The report charges that 90% of the church relief agency’s budget came from the US AID program “on a *quid pro quo* basis, which presupposed the church agency would reciprocate ‘by accepting U.S. policy without criticism and by sharing information with US AID personnel.’” US AID was admittedly a CIA cover in Laos from 1962, and perhaps elsewhere as well. Catholic Relief Services also supplied rations for interrogation centers and political prisons, including the Con Son prison with its “tiger cages.” It was incorporated into the U.S. refugee program which forced “Vietnamese civilians from homes and farms into refugee camps, which were supplied by the organization.” After earlier criticisms in this regard, the organization “merely changed the accounting procedures,” Rashke alleges. Quotes from Marjorie Hyer, *Washington Post* (13 December 1976). See also Kenneth A. Briggs, *New York Times* (14 December 1976).

Western visitors to Indochina (including one of us) have observed the cruel and inhuman attitude of some Catholic missionaries towards the population, which has a long history. It is remarkable that the testimony of Catholic missionaries condemning alleged practices of Indochinese revolutionaries is so commonly accepted without question in the West.

On the role of missionaries in Vietnam and elsewhere, see the interview with Doug Hostetter, “An Insider’s Story: Religious Agencies in Viet-Nam,” in NACLA’s *Latin America and Empire Report*, December 1973: *Christian Mission for the Empire*; Rev. Richard Edwards, “The CIA and Christian Mission: Can We Get the CIA Out of the Church,” *Signs of the Times*, Winter, 1978. Both articles review evidence of what Hostetter calls the “nice hand-in-glove relationship between the Christian clergy and the U.S. military” and the CIA. Cf. also Volume I, chapter 3, section 4.3.

[68](#). The Catholic Church seems to be taking the same stand. At the Synod of Bishops in Rome, October, 1977, the Archbishop of Saigon who attended and then travelled in Europe along with Cardinal Trin Nhu-Kue of Hanoi, discussed the problems faced by the church in operating in a “marxist milieu”: “Instead of theoretical discussions, the communists want only concrete facts. The christians therefore have to show a new countenance, the authentic countenance of Christ and the Church.” Accordingly, “In July, 1976 at the Episcopal Conference of the two ecclesiastical provinces of Hue and

Saigon we bishops unanimously and without ambiguity launched an appeal to all the Catholics, inviting them to take the way of commitment, i.e., contribute to the construction of society.” The Pope, in response, urged Catholic relief organizations to offer assistance to Vietnam and encouraged Catholics in Vietnam to take part with all their strength in “the great work of reconstruction” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 9 December 1977); distributed along with the statement of the Archbishop by *Fraternité Vietnam*—see note 51, this chapter).

See Henry Tanner, “Saigon Archbishop Says Coexistence with Reds is Vital,” *New York Times* (10 October 1977). On the “reconciliation between the anti-communist Roman Catholic Church of the south and the unified communist government,” see Nayan Chanda, “Clergy and comrades link arms,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 October 1976. Chanda discusses the goodwill shown by the government towards the church after the dismantling of a counterrevolutionary group discovered with arms and equipment for counterfeiting currency in a southern church; see Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 February 1976 and Turley (see note 72, this chapter). Chanda also cites a letter from the Saigon Archbishop to a Paris Catholic newspaper in which he explains the cooperation of the church with the Communists on grounds that religious freedom “has really been respected” including liturgical ceremonies and conversions to Catholicism.

69. G. Gianni, mimeographed, Hong Kong. “Vietnam, Vietnam: A Missionary’s reflections after liberation.”
70. A few of the many hints that the press might have followed up had it chosen to do so, apart from those already cited: Bill and Peggy Herod, “Vietnam Observations from Hong Kong,” *The Disciple*, 17 April 1977; H. Lamar Gible of the Board of World Ministry, “Report on consultations with religious leaders in Vietnam,” 4-11 May 1977; Rev. George W. Webber, Chairperson of Clergy and Laity Concerned, letter, *Washington Post*, 12 January 1977; representatives of the AFSC and church groups who lived in or visited Vietnam after liberation, who testified in Congressional Hearings: Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, June 16, 21 and July 26, 1977 (among them Don Luce, who had lived and worked in Vietnam for many years as head of International Voluntary Services and as a journalist, is fluent in Vietnamese, and met privately with “at least 50 former friends,” generally Third Force people, including friends who had returned from

reeducation centers); and many others.

71. The group is small for many reasons, one of them being the inability of many young scholars who depart from mainstream ideology to obtain employment, a matter that amply merits a careful study; there are many examples that illustrate a minor academic purge.
72. William S. Turley, "Urban transformation in South Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs*, Winter, 1976-77.
73. The term "ironic" seems out of place, in the light of the systematic policies of the United States throughout its far-flung subfascist domains.
74. We have found no record of this. As far as we can determine, Hoan was a minor member of a neutralist Buddhist group. Don Luce, who was well-acquainted with Third Force leaders, testified in the Hearings that he did not know Hoan "as an outspoken antigovernment figure there." Whatever his role may have been, he never achieved the prominence of such non-Communist dissidents as Ngo Ba Thanh, Ngo Cong Duc, Ly Chanh Trung, Father Chan Tin, Huynh Tan Mam, or others now reported to be active in southern Vietnam, whose reports are ignored.
75. In his testimony before the same committee, Nguyen Van Coi of the militantly anti-Communist Hoa Hao Buddhist sect estimates the number of prisoners at one million. Actually his testimony is in some respects more convincing than that of Hoan, since he recounts numerous personal incidents of torture and abuse during almost a year in detention centers and forced labor camps before his escape in October 1976, whereas Hoan offers almost no direct testimony.

The official government position is that there are about 50,000 people imprisoned "for security reasons." *International Herald Tribune*, 5 February 1977. Reports on the character of "reeducation camps" vary widely. Compare the testimony of Coi with the observations of McCleary and Meinertz in the Congressional Hearings (see note 70, this chapter), and the subsequent remarks of Luce (115) on conversations with people released from camps. (See also Chanda, p. 68, and similar reporting in Lacouture, *op. cit. and elsewhere.*) In the private hearings cited above (note 56), Luce quotes the report of one American, Jay Scarborough, who spent five months in a camp and described the treatment as humane. Actually, there is no direct inconsistency among these radically conflicting reports; it is possible that the camps vary widely in character.

The Lacoutures conclude that the camps "are evidently not Gulag—not l'école des

Roches [a finishing school] either.” Richard Dudman, who describes a visit to one camp, reports the view of several Western diplomats in Hanoi that the reeducation program seems “to have been an effective trade-off that avoided any possibility of the bloodbath” that had long been predicted after a bitter civil struggle. “Several individual non-Communist Vietnamese who could be questioned privately said that they had been amazed at the leniency of the victorious Communists.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, “Vietnam’s Dismal New Camps,” (3 November 1977). See also, Casella, *op. cit.*

76. This was offered in response to a question by Rep. Smeeton about the “50,000 to 500,000 people...killed during the ‘refashioning’ of the North’s agriculture and economy” in the 1950s. In an earlier session, Turley had testified on these exaggerated propaganda claims, offering the estimate of probably 5,000 killed on the basis of Moise’s careful study. Cf. Volume I, chapter 5, section 2.2. As is so often true, mere fact is never allowed to get in the way of useful propaganda concerning the enemy.

77. In Africa, the Middle East, and Taiwan, Hoan said, referring to unidentified press reports.

78. See the eyewitness reports of Ediger, Klassen, Tran and many others. In the same Congressional Hearings Don Luce reported that he had seen religious materials published in South Vietnam and had attended churches in Hanoi and Saigon that were functioning with parishioners. He also recalled that the Archbishop of Hanoi was recently made a Cardinal by the Vatican, and stated that the former teachers continue to teach in Catholic Schools. Paul F. Mcleary, Executive Director of the World Church Service Delegation, testified that he “went unexpectedly to a 6 a.m. mass at a Roman Catholic Church. It was filled.” The Archbishop said that “there were over 100 studying in a major seminary to go into the priesthood, that they were not decreasing in terms of the size of the church, but he felt they were now growing....At this point, the leadership of the Buddhist community, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant Church...seem supportive of the present political situation, the present government, and did not give indications that these kinds of pressures existed upon them, or that there were restraints on their activities.” In the 22 August 1978 Hearings (see note 27, this chapter) Archbishop Philip M. Hannan described his attendance at a crowded mass. (See notes, 52, 68, 70, 83, this chapter.)

79. Snapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 433, 14. The White House “flatly denied” the last charge and U.S. Ambassador Bunker was also quoted as denying it, but it is correct, as revealed by a CIA memo in a pretrial deposition in a government suit against Snapp. Charles R.

Babcock, "CIA Memo Confirms U.S. Offer to Fund '71 Viet Candidate," *Washington Post* (28 May 1978). For more information on Buu's association with Diem's *Can Lao* Party and such notorious pro-imperialist and anti-labor groups as the AFL-CIO international relations operations (see chapter 1, note 3) and the Christian Democratic Konrad Adenauer Foundation in West Germany, his gross corruption, and the service of his union for the privileged rather than the poor, see *Der Spiegel* (16 April 1973), based on information by a West German who worked with an affiliate of the Adenauer Foundation in Vietnam from 1969-72. See Chomsky and Herman, "Saigon's corruption crisis: the search for an honest Quisling," *Ramparts*, December 1974, for some details.

80. Cf. Turley, *op. cit.*, for discussion on relative popular participation under Thieu and the new regime, which suggests rather different conclusions.

81. See references of note 6, this chapter.

82. See Turley, *op. cit.*, for a comparison of the Thieu programs with those of the new regime.

83. Several examples have been mentioned and we return to others. One further well-known example is Richard Hughes, who continued his work with orphans while living with the Vietnamese until he left in August, 1976. Even during the war, American visitors to Vietnam were free to speak privately to Vietnamese whom they met through professional and other contacts and the absence of overt security was remarkable under the circumstances, as we know from direct experience and the testimony of friends. For example, one of us (Chomsky) spent many hours with professional colleagues in Hanoi and walked unaccompanied through both urban and remote village areas. Hoan's claim requires us to believe that policies have radically changed in the postwar period, despite substantial testimony to the contrary. We have heard privately from reputable journalists who have visited Vietnam that friends from earlier years seemed afraid to talk to them, but that is considerably short of Hoan's blanket claim. Others do not report anything of the sort. For example, John Fraser of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reports that he spent two weeks "in and around Ho Chi Minh city," left to his own devices insofar as he chose. He "covered nearly all the districts of the city, by day and night, and talked to a great number of people." He found "the willingness of so many people to talk openly about their frustrations and complaints...exhilarating—a journalist's gold mine," though ultimately this openness was "oppressive" since he "had no help or remedies to offer" to their discontents. His testimony too is radically inconsistent with Hoan's claims.

As for the “discontent” so openly voiced in Saigon, Fraser found that “the complaints were rarely what we in the West would describe as human rights problems” but rather “huge gripes about the declining standard of living,” that is, the decline in the “subsidized and materialistic standard of living [that] had been provided for this city” (or at least those elements of the city with whom journalists were familiar). Like other commentators concerned with fact, he too points out that the Communists have gone out of their way to maintain the artificial economy of Saigon, despite the grinding poverty elsewhere: “For all the talk of revenge, people in Saigon eat better, dress better, work less and have more trinkets to play with than the people of Hanoi, whose poverty remains real and painfully obvious.” Fraser was particularly struck by the Saigon “cowboys,” “some of the toughest young people I have ever encountered,” the gangster element created by the U.S. invaders who now refuse to work and constitute a continuing social problem. Fraser found the new Saigon/Ho Chi Minh city to be neither at the extreme of “a city groaning under oppression” nor a city with “a new dignity,” though it had “aspects of both.” Reprinted in the *Christian Science Monitor* (5 December 1978), from the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (25 November 1978). This is part 2 of a seven-part series (24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 November and 1 December). In other sections, he describes the horrendous problems facing this “blighted land” of “grinding poverty” in the North and a “declining standard of living” for those in the South who have to “come to terms with the reality of Vietnam’s over-all poverty.” The problems include the legacy of the war, open warfare along the Cambodian border and a dangerous confrontation with China, catastrophic flooding and “the prospect of famine,” and “an almost complete lack of foreign funds to pay for its modest plans in modernization.” The ethnic Chinese, he believes, are not persecuted in the North, “while in the South, the actual persecution of ethnic Chinese is based exclusively on class and economic divisions.” But the problem was handled quite clumsily, he believes. In contrast, “the Catholic question is being managed with considerable sophistication and finesse” in the South, and he gives an interesting account of Church-State accommodation and conflict. He also relates conversations with Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh and Father Huynh Cong Minh, “also a member of the National Assembly as well as the editor of a national Catholic newspaper,” both non-Communists who struck him “as deeply troubled and sincere people struggling to come to terms with present-day reality in Vietnam,” basically supportive of the regime and its policies.

84. The “redeployment” of the population towards new economic zones in unsettled areas of the South, announced shortly before by the government, was to include 150,000

Northerners. *Le Monde* (15 January 1977).

- [85.](#) Bishop Thuan is in fact held under police custody in Hanoi, according to a letter from Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) that was “slipped out” to the Vatican “under the noses of Communist officials.” Thuan is a nephew of former President Diem and “an outspoken anti-Communist.” Archbishop Binh wrote that he had met with Thuan just before his trip to Rome (see note 68). He wrote that Thuan is “in good health, although a little thinner, and alert in his mind” and quoted him as saying that he was well-treated: “I am quite well today, so please, when you go to Rome, explain to the Pope and to the archbishop who is in charge of preaching and to others what is the truth in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. I say these things, not because of the presence of this cadre in Hanoi but because it is the truth.” Richard Dudman, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (7 November 1977). Dudman was informed of the letter by Father Chan Tin in Ho Chi Minh City.
- [86.](#) David Tharp, “Political defector blasts Viet repression,” *Christian Science Monitor* (4 May 1977).
- [87.](#) Don Luce, who is fluent in Vietnamese, reported that “I could go to the marketplace by myself and talk to whomever I wanted to there. I went to visit friends of mine in their homes alone and could talk to them about their views on what was happening there.” Congressional Hearings, June-July, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 114. See also the reports by the Vietnamese visitors from Canada, the AFSC workers, Hughes, Ediger, Klassen, and other Americans fluent in Vietnamese. (See also notes 83 and 97).
- [88.](#) Henry Kamm, “Defector From Hanoi Depicts Conditions,” *New York Times* (18 May 1977).
- [89.](#) Or the local Japanese press. Rep. Derwinski quoted from an article about Hoan in the Japanese press in the Congressional Hearings, *op. cit.* p. 137-138.
- [90.](#) Henry Kamm, “Vietnamese Who Fled To Speak Out Find It Isn’t Easy,” *New York Times* (10 June 1977).
- [91.](#) Theodore Jacqueney, “Hanoi’s Gulag Archipelago: Human Rights in Vietnam,” *AFL-CIO Trade Union News*, September 1977.
- [92.](#) See the report of the Indochina Resource Center replying to Jacqueney, Appendix 2 of the Congressional Hearings on Vietnam; see note 70. For supplementary information, see Chomsky and Herman, “Saigon’s corruption crisis.” Whatever one may think of the arrest of Thanh after the Vinh Son affair, Jacqueney’s characterization of him gives

some insight into his own standards of evaluation.

Another person alleged by Jacqueney to be a prisoner is Tran Ngoc Chau, who was arrested by the Thieu regime and imprisoned in 1969. Chau had been Program Director of Revolutionary Development, a pacification program designed to gather intelligence on the NLF infrastructure, and in his trial claimed to be a supporter of Thieu and Nixon (see Indochina Resource Center report, cited above). Jacqueney does not report the fact that Chau was framed with the collaboration of William Colby, CIA Station Chief Theodore Shackley and Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, and that the CIA in Washington refused to evacuate him from Vietnam (Snepp, *op. cit.*, p. 15; recall Casella's observation, p. 84 above). Richard Dudman reported from Vietnam that "A well-informed Vietnamese said that Chau had been under house arrest until early October but now was free" (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3 November 1977).

93. The reason cannot have been that U.S. journals do not review French books or that Lacouture is unknown. For example, Father François Ponchaud's highly critical account of postwar Cambodia became an instant media hit when it was reviewed in the *New York Review* by Jean Lacouture, with considerable embellishment, only a few weeks after its publication in Paris. We return to this book and its reception in the West in chapter 6.
94. According to the *New York Review*, he arrived in Vietnam "in December 1948 and stayed on for twenty-eight years." He himself says that he arrived in Vietnam in 1957 and "starting in 1963, and for 13 years without interruption, I was on the staff of the Alexander-de-Rhodes Student Center...(Congressional Hearings, June-July, 1977, p. 81). Later he claims to "have lived with the people for 19 years" (p. 22). *The Globe and Mail* introduces him as having spent 19 years in Vietnam. The issue is not particularly important in itself, but gains some interest in the context of the more general question of the credibility of Gelinas's report and the media treatment of it.

According to a detailed curriculum vitae provided by Father Tran Tam Tinh of *Fraternité Vietnam* in a letter of 15 March 1977, Gelinas spent the years 1958-59 and 1965-76 in Saigon. In 1957 and 1964 he was in Taiwan and from 1960-63 at Columbia University in New York. Basically the same account appears in *Seven Days*, 9 May 1977 in an article by Jon Steinberg.

95. Cited by Robert K. Musil, "Vietnam and the press," Appendix 7 of the Congressional Hearings of June-July, 1977.

[96](#). Quotes henceforth are from the English translation in the *New York Review*.

[97](#). To our knowledge, no visitor or resident in Vietnam apart from Gelinas has reported mass suicides in September-October, 1975 following the currency regulations. Ms. Forsythe, however, has some other things to say based on her three years in South Vietnam, including 6 months after the war when “I was free to travel anywhere in the city, and did so...by public bus or on foot...[which]...gave me ample chance to meet ordinary people and observe the impact of the new government on the daily lives of people.” She reports having seen children suffering from severe malnutrition under the U.S.-Thieu regime, eating only leaves, apparently because the Saigon armed forces were hoarding rice purchased by the United States for distribution to the needy, and children killed or wounded by ARVN soldiers for revenge or “target practice.” She also describes the many false rumors that circulated during and after the war about Viet Cong atrocities, discussions with neighbors who returned to ordinary lives after “study and practice” (i.e., “reeducation”), the impressive spirit of students who were engaged in social and economic reconstruction, and the substantial improvement in health care for the poor people who “are benefactors of any aid that is flowing into that country” which, for the first time, has honest officials. She denies most of what Gelinas reports, saying “It is very hard for me in listening to Father Gelinas to square what he says with my own experience,” the standard reaction, as we shall see. Her report, as distinct from that of Gelinas, did not exactly become an international media sensation.

[98](#). Cited by Musil, *op. cit.* *This did not appear in the New York Times report of 16 December cited above.*

[99](#). Musil, *op. cit.*, his emphasis.

[100](#). See Volume I, chapter 5, section 2.2.

[101](#). Cf. Musil, *op. cit.*

[102](#). Cf. Musil, *ibid.*, for further discussion.

[103](#). Compare the report by Father Gianni (cf. note 69), who left Vietnam at the same time as Gelinas. “I remember the day on which many of us were invited to a meeting with the civil authorities. They thanked all of us foreign religious for the many years missionaries from abroad had been working in Vietnam. But since they claimed that the number of native Vietnamese priests, sisters and religious was sufficient, we were no longer needed, and so they invited us to return to our own native countries...Here, as in many other cases, when the socialist government of Vietnam invited foreign

missionaries to leave, this brought into focus a situation in need of correction for many years in Vietnam.”

[104.](#) *Toronto Globe and Mail* (23 March 1977).

[105.](#) Don Braid, “Viets ‘pray for war,’” *Montreal Star* (26 March 1977). Excerpts of the *L’Express-New York Review* interview are reprinted, and the journal notes that this “highly unflattering report...has appeared in mass-circulation newspapers and magazines in France, Italy, England and the United States.” Here Gelinas is said to have “lived in Vietnam for 15 years” (see note 94), and he has become the “director of the Alexander of Rhodes Education Center.”

[106.](#) Martin, who remained in Vietnam after the war ended, is the author of *Reaching the Other Side*; cf. note 10, this chapter. Many of the same charges by Gelinas are refuted, on the basis of direct eyewitness observation, by Forsythe, Hughes, and the Canadian Vietnamese visitors; for example, his claims about a “coup d’état against the PRG” on July 19-20, 1975, when “the city woke up in a state of siege,” and the PRG headquarters “was surrounded by armored cars” (he expands on this “coup” in his congressional testimony). During this “coup,” Martin reports, “friends and I rode bicycles freely around town” observing nothing except somewhat enhanced security arrangements in expectation of demonstrations and violence that did not eventuate; he also points out that Gelinas mislocated the PRG headquarters. Forsythe also reports that while there was street gossip about a possible “coup,” it “never took place” and “there was no unrest” and “never a purging of the PRG from any level in Saigon” to her knowledge. Hughes adds that not only was there no “coup d’état against the PRG,” but in fact any such coup “would have resoundingly failed because, among other things,” the place mentioned by Gelinas is “not where their ‘headquarters’ was” (they actually had no headquarters, he adds, but rather leadership was “decentralized into a plethora of almost autonomous ‘offices’ (themselves broken down into smaller teams), functions, and locations.” Hughes also comments on the absurdity of the belief that tanks and infantry could have rounded up “a widely scattered, guerrilla leadership who, for years, had resisted one of the world’s most sophisticated war machines.” The remainder of Gelinas’s charges suffer a like fate, according to eyewitnesses who were not, like Gelinas, living behind what Hughes calls “the barred entrance of the walled-off Western style Alexandre-de-Rhodes center.”

[107.](#) Recall that this claim is expressly denied by numerous independent observers, cited above. It is worth noting, perhaps, Gelinas’s statement that “the churches have never

been fuller,” contradicting the claims of the other media favorite, Nguyen Cong Hoan; but this is because “many Vietnamese find solace in prayer.” The contradictions on this score between Gelinas and Hoan have not troubled the journalists and editors who cite them both as giving the true picture of life in Vietnam, an interesting example of the ability of the faithful to tolerate counterevidence. According to Hughes, Gelinas told him: “people were ordered to have a good Christmas [in December, 1975], to have religious services.” There was no written order, he added in response to questioning, but local authorities “gave the churches Christmas trees. To show the world, you see.”

[108.](#) “‘Liberation’ Comes to Vietnam,” *New York Times* editorial (21 March 1977).

[109.](#) Cf. the *Times retrospective assessment of the war*, discussed in chapter 2, section 1.

[110.](#) See note 94.

[111.](#) Editorial, “Harvest in Vietnam,” (21 April 1977).

[112.](#) Consistent with their general concern for factual accuracy, the editors misspell his name throughout.

[113.](#) *Vietnam South East Asia International*, March-April 1977. “Only about ten people attended and a number of those walked out in protest.”

[114.](#) Recall a point that is quite significant in this connection. Gelinas was completely unknown. His various accounts cite no evidence or documentation, and their credibility therefore depends entirely on *his credibility*, as judged by comments of his that are subject to check. To appreciate properly the Western reaction to Gelinas, consider the following hypothetical case: imagine that Russian forces were driven out of Hungary next year, and that a Russian who had worked for many years in a Russian cultural center in Hungary came forward in the Soviet Union, deploring the situation in Hungary after liberation without citing any evidence that could be checked, offering reports that are entirely at variance with eyewitness accounts of others during the same period, and describing Hungary under Russian rule as a land of freedom and wealth, now suffering under the yoke of an oppressor. Under such hypothetical circumstances, no one familiar with the Soviet propaganda system would be surprised to discover that his reports receive wide publicity and much acclaim and are used by editorialists as a club to beat Russian dissidents who denounced Russian rule in Hungary, the 1956 invasion, etc. The Western treatment of Gelinas is quite comparable, and once again gives an insight into the workings of the Free Press.

[115.](#) He is predictably silent on the decimation of southern forces by the United States.

- [116](#). Gelinas tells us little about his ministrations to his flock during his years in Vietnam. An American visitor to the bookstore he ran remembers him as “the only priest who was a hawk and who seemed more interested in business than in religious matters. Books of the neutralist Third Force were not sold in his store, but he did have a government monopoly on all translations of government books into Western languages.” Jon Steinberg, *op. cit.* (see note 94). Gelinas’s bitterness towards the government that forced him to leave is understandable, Steinberg adds, while “Those who print his stories as truth have less excuse.”
- [117](#). See note 83. Recall that Fraser interviewed non-Communist activists who had defended political prisoners under the Thieu regime and who, contrary to what Paringaux wrote, had not “now become silent” but expressed their support for the general policies of the regime. Fraser’s account also conflicts with the well-publicized French reports in other significant respects. His reaction to their reports appears in part four of his seven-part series, 28 November 1978.
- [118](#). CBS news, 6 p.m. (5 October); Jim Browning, “Repression in Vietnam growing?,” *Christian Science Monitor* (6 October); Editorial, “Vietnam’s ‘Gulag Archipelago,’” *ibid.*, 10 October; Joseph Fitchett, “Saigon Residents Found Intimidated by ‘Occupation Force,’” *Washington Post* (6 November 1978), reprinted from the *International Herald Tribune*. October 28, 29, citing reports by four French journalists who recently spent 10 days [in Saigon], gaining the most extensive access of any Western reporters since 1975.” *The New York Times* was then on strike. Both CBS and Browning refer to *Le Monde* as a left-wing newspaper, but otherwise, their reports were generally accurate.

The editorial is about what one would expect in a journal that not long ago was featuring discussions by one of its saner commentators (Joseph Harsch) on the relative merits of bombing trucks and dams (the latter so much more satisfying to the pilots, who come home “with a feeling of accomplishment” when they see the waters “pour through the breach and drown out huge areas of farm land, and villages, in its path” and so much more effective in “hurt[ing] people”). For lengthy quotes, see *American Power and the New Mandarins*, p. 14; for analogies, see the Nazi archives.

- [119](#). It is less appropriate, however, to ignore the subsequent discussion in *Le Monde*, including the reply of the Vietnamese Ambassador to France, November 10. See the extensive discussion and analysis in *Vietnam South East Asia International*.
- [120](#). See *At War with Asia*, pp. 96f., for quotes and discussion. The text appears in N.S.

Adams and A.W. McCoy, eds., *Laos: War and Revolution*, Harper and Row, 1970.

[121](#). See chapter 5, note 12.

[122](#). *Le Monde hebdomadaire* (18-24 January 1968).

[123](#). *New Statesman*, 1 December 1967.

[124](#). Cf. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, pp. 249, 285. Other comparable examples of effective press self-censorship are reported there. In most of the cases mentioned, including the ones we cite here, much effort was expended in trying to convince the media to publish the facts, with no success.

[125](#). For a comparable example, see chapter 6, note 102.

5 Laos

1. See Bernard Fall, *Anatomy of a Crisis: The Laotian Crisis of 1960-61*, Doubleday, 1969, for a detailed exposure of some of the more ludicrous incidents in the early phases of the U.S. war; this exposure, like others, had no detectable effect on subsequent reporting.
2. See the reports by Henry Kamm in the *New York Times*, cited below; or for example a Sunday feature story by Ogden Williams, “The Tragic Plight of our Abandoned Allies,” *Washington Post* (24 September 1978). Williams is identified as a former CIA officer who also worked with USAID in Vietnam—quite possibly, a distinction without a difference in this case, since as was finally conceded in public, the aid program, in Laos at least, was providing a CIA cover from 1962. He claims that the Hmong army organized by the CIA was tying up two divisions of North Vietnamese regulars in Laos. Comparable claims are common, but tend to evaporate on investigation; cf. the references of footnote 4 for detailed analyses. Sources close to the U.S. government estimate perhaps one combat regiment of North Vietnamese soldiers in northern Laos, where the CIA army was fighting, in 1968.
3. See Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, Harper and Row, 1972; Walter Haney, “A Survey of Civilian War Casualties Among Refugees from the Plain of Jars,” U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Hearings before the [Kennedy] Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, 92nd Congress, 1st session, 22 July 1971, Appendix 2; “A Survey of Civilian Fatalities Among Refugees from Xieng Khouang Province, Laos,” Kennedy Subcommittee Hearings, 92nd Congress, second session, 9 May 1972, part 2, “Cambodia and Laos,” Appendix 2; see also his paper “The

Pentagon Papers and U.S. Involvement in Laos,” in N. Chomsky and H. Zinn, eds., *The Pentagon Papers*, Critical Essays, vol. 5 of the Senator Gravel edition of the *Pentagon Papers*, Beacon, 1972. See also the references of footnote 4.

4. For a detailed analysis of the material just briefly reviewed, see N. Chomsky, *At War with Asia*, Pantheon, 1970, chapter 3; *For Reasons of State*, Pantheon, 1973, chapter 2; and references and documentary evidence cited there. The scholarly literature is useful but must be treated with care, since as demonstrated in the sources just cited the conclusions reached often derive from the most dubious evidence, sometimes sheer fabrication on the part of government officials who are taken quite seriously despite their long record of prevarication.
5. See John Everingham, “Press war creates problems for Laos,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, writing from Vientiane before his expulsion on the “hostile and inaccurate Thai press coverage of Laotian affairs” that “may convince those not on the spot,” and on the questionable “principle of reporting Laos from Thailand,” where one finds a “stream of anti-Lao hysteria and falsities.”
6. *Laos Recovers from America’s War*, Southeast Asia Chronicle, no. 61, March-April 1978, P.O. Box 4000D, Berkeley, California 94704. Most of the material in this issue is by the Hieberts. Other material is supplied by Mennonite missionaries still in Laos.
7. “How now, Laos?,” *Christian Science Monitor* (10 June 1975).
8. Hieberts, *op. cit.* These features of lovely little Laos, and of other “small old places,” have intrigued thoughtful U.S. observers like Reasoner much less than the eroticism, which, as visitors to Vientiane quickly learned, was a major preoccupation of the press corps, many of whose members seemed to divide their time between the U.S. Embassy (where they received “the news”), the hotel bars, and the local house of prostitution. As elsewhere in Indochina, there were noteworthy exceptions.
9. See footnotes 1 and 4.
10. Wolfgang Saxon, “Long Fratricidal Strife in Laos Was Intensified by Outsiders,” *New York Times* (24 August 1975).
11. E.g., Phoumi Nosavan’s “proclaimed anti-Communism won him military aid from the Eisenhower administration and the Thai government” in 1960. In fact, Phoumi was armed and backed by the United States in his successful effort to overthrow the government recognized by the United States, and thousands of Thai troops (virtually, U.S. mercenaries) were apparently fighting in Laos (see *At War with Asia*). *The U.S.*

role in overthrowing the 1958 political settlement in which the Pathet Lao emerged as the dominant force is not so much as mentioned, though it is entirely beyond controversy. See, for example, Hugh Toye, *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground*, Oxford, 1968; Charles Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy towards Laos Since 1964*, Beacon, 1972.

12. See T.D. Allman, *New York Times* (1 October 1969) reporting on the testimony of refugees from the Plain of Jars and concluding that “the rebel economy and social fabric” are now the main target of the U.S. bombardment, which is claimed to be a success: “The bombing, by creating refugees, deprives the Communists of their chief source of food and transport. The population of the Pathet Lao zone has been declining for several years and the Pathet Lao find it increasingly difficult to fight a ‘people’s war’ with fewer and fewer people.” On the same day *Le Monde* (weekly selection) reported that this “battering” of Laos had been going on for over five years and that “the United States Air Force carries out more than 12,500 raids a month.” As already noted, eyewitness reports of the U.S. attack on the rebel economy and social fabric had been reported by Jacques Decornoy of *Le Monde* in July 1968, and repeatedly brought to the attention of editors of the *New York Times* and other journals, to no effect. See p. 134, above.

See also the eyewitness report by T.D. Allman at just the time when Air Force Secretary Robert Seamans, visiting the same areas, reported that “I have seen no evidence of indiscriminate bombing.” Allman’s report of massive destruction from highly discriminate bombing aimed at civilian targets appeared in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Manchester Guardian*; Seaman’s failure to see anything was reported in the *Washington Post*. Direct reporting from the ground by Michael Morrow did not appear in the U.S. press at all, to our knowledge, as befits observations of U.S. atrocities by a Western reporter who concludes that “it is unlikely that Americans are or will ever be around to pick up the unexploded pieces of the most extensive bombing campaign in history,” a campaign that is now being expunged from the historical records. See *At War with Asia*, pp. 95f; *For Reasons of State*, pp. 173f. For the Decornoy report and much other valuable material that is conveniently ignored in the United States, see N.S. Adams and A.W. McCoy, eds., *Laos: War and Revolution*, Harper, 1970.

13. Given what is known about CIA control and activities, it seems likely that this was part of a U.S. intelligence campaign. This places the subsequent show of compassion

for the refugees—see footnote 2—in a still more ugly light.

14. Daniel Southerland, “Lao tribesmen moving out,” *Christian Science Monitor* (30 May 1975). Southerland was one of the small group of correspondents in Indochina who maintained a high level of professional integrity throughout. We are indebted to Louis and Eryl Kubicka of the AFSC, who spent three years in Laos (including two and one-half years after the war), for additional information about Lyteck and for helpful comments and information about other matters. The Kubickas have made extensive efforts to bring information about postwar Laos to the U.S. press, to little effect. They inform us that their accounts were seriously distorted by *New York Times* reporters *Paul Hoffman and David Andelman*, “by the device of omission and by taking the negative side of balanced statements we made” and other standard Free Press techniques. An important analysis of Thai perception of U.S. moves to undermine Thai democracy prior to the October 1976 military coup (see Volume I, chapter 4, section 2) was submitted to the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other journals, but rejected. For their own account of the postwar situation in Laos, see Louis Kubicka, “Laos: Resettlement Begins on Bombed-Out Plain of Jars—Minus U.S. AID,” *Los Angeles Times* (1 March 1976); “War Hangover in Laos,” *Eastern Horizon*, March 1978; “From the Plain of Jars,” *Progressive*, March 1978.
15. “Learning to Love the Pathet Lao,” *Washington Post* (27 October 1975).
16. Norman Peagam, “Communist Changes in Laos Upset Easy-Going Way of Life,” *New York Times* (3 May 1977).
17. Interviews with two refugees who returned are reported by John and Beulah Yoder of the Mennonites, writing from Vientiane in February, 1978 in *Laos Recovers from America’s War*. One, a Hmong tribesman now in a teacher training college, recalls “the intense anti-Lao propaganda in the Thai camps” and the “many lies about Laos” spread in France. In the Thai camp, “we lived like pigs. No one had enough to eat” and the Thai military attempted to recruit refugees to fight communism, possibly in Laos, while camp guards beat or imprisoned anyone trying to escape. The second says that he fled to Thailand “because I didn’t understand the policies or goals of the new regime. In the old regime we were taught only to make ourselves rich. We were not taught love for our nation.” Living in France, he “learned about the goals of the new Lao regime” from the Lao student organization. “He realized they had a vision for Laos which he could share.” On the Thai camps, see footnote 24 below.
18. Since these important elements of the “prisoners” in “re-education camps” are a legacy

of Western imperialism, they are regularly disregarded in Western commentary.

- [19.](#) “Political repression reported in Laos,” *Boston Globe* (10 February 1978). (See footnote 5, above.)
- [20.](#) Henry Kamm, “Hill People Who Fought for U.S. Are Fleeing Laos,” *New York Times* (28 March 1978); “Laos Said to Battle Internal Resistance,” *New York Times* (29 March 1978). Both stories are filed from Thailand.
- [21.](#) A phrase of rare accuracy from this pen, though one wonders whether the author comprehends its meaning.
- [22.](#) See chapter 1, note 16. In the documents cited there, it is proposed that Thailand be developed “as the focal point of U.S. covert and psychological operations in Southeast Asia.” The proposal was implemented, and Thailand also became a major base for direct U.S. military operations against Laos and Vietnam, and for CIA-backed groups attempting to undermine the neutralist government of Cambodia. (See Volume I, chapter 4, section 2; chapter 6, below, and references cited there).
- [23.](#) On the “growing Vietnamese influence,” always a staple of U.S. reporting—it has been “growing” in the U.S. press for some 25 years—see footnote 4, and also pp. 147, 151-53, below, and note 31.
- [24.](#) On the Thai refugee camps, see John Burgess, “City of broken lives,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 May 1978. According to refugees, some “use the camp as a base to support the guerrillas harassing the communist government in Laos” though most are more interested in finding another country, usually the United States, to take them in. “People leave Laos for varied reasons: some because they are threatened with reeducation, some because they have records as prostitutes or criminals, others because they cannot find jobs.” The underworld is thriving in the camp, where Thai police “claimed to have discovered a syndicate...that was producing Laotian women for the brothels of Bangkok,” and the drug trade flourishes. 41% of the people in the camp “claimed direct or indirect membership in U.S.-affiliated agencies, mostly the old Laotian armed forces.” A few of the camp’s people intend to join the anti-Communist resistance in Laos, and “one well-placed refugee” reports that small numbers “pass in and out of Laos with help and equipment from the Thai military.” A Hmong veteran of the CIA army reports that “his village had been destroyed by artillery” while others claim that the Lao government used poison gas against them.

- [25.](#) It is superfluous to note that Vietnam’s attempts “to establish normal links with the

West” have been blocked at every turn by the U.S. government, since Hanoi has not yet succeeded in meeting the exalted standards set by the United States, to the applause of the Free Press.

26. Peter Kovler, “Laos’s need: U.S. rice,” *New York Times* (14 March 1978). The Op-Ed page of the *Times* is the spot where all sorts of odd opinions are permitted occasional expression.
27. See footnote 6. This is the only press reference to the Hieberts that we have noted, though their eyewitness report from a country virtually closed to the West would have been featured in a country enjoying a free press.
28. The reference, presumably, is to the Plain of Jars, where the vast U.S.-inflicted war damage remains unrepaired (if indeed it can be repaired).
29. The impending starvation is a result of the U.S. attack and also the natural disasters that have afflicted Southeast Asia in the past several years.
30. In what it called “a humanitarian aid decision in keeping with the Administration’s policy of answering basic human needs,” the Carter Administration agreed to send 10,000 tons of rice in August and September of 1978; UPI, “U.S. giving \$5m in rice to Laos,” *Boston Globe* (2 June 1978); Don Oberdorfer, “U.S. Will Give Laos \$5 Million in Food Aid To Avert a ‘Disaster,’” *Washington Post* (1 June 1978). The last U.S. aid was in 1974, when 24,000 tons of rice were sent. The 10,000 tons allegedly forthcoming would supplement the 80,000 tons pledged by other countries. Note that the fear of jeopardizing the canal treaties was past, at this time.

It appears, however, that even this tiny gesture towards “humanitarianism” was a fraud. When the State Department announced that a piddling 10,000 tons of food would be released for the starving Lao on May 31, it was assumed that this munificence would be in addition to the regular contribution of the United States to the World Food Program of the United Nations, which had pledged 30,000 tons of food to Laos. But it seems that the U.S. donation is to be “merely a *part of its normal biannual contribution to WFP*, and no more.” The estimated need in Laos to avoid disaster is at least 120,000 tons of emergency food. Roger Rumpf and Jacqui Chagnon, AFSC representatives in Laos, letter, *Washington Post* (14 October 1978). *There appear to be no limits to the cynicism of the Human Rights Administration.*

31. Nayan Chanda, “Laos keeps up a cold front,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 April 1977. Vietnamese influence in Laos has no doubt been growing, for several reasons,

among them, punitive U.S. policies towards Laos and Vietnam and the Vietnam-China conflict. Occasionally, propaganda fabricated with no concern for fact may be accurate—in this case, in part as a consequence of the brutal policies supported or concealed by the media.

- [32.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Drought Worsens Laotian Plight,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 August 1977.
- [33.](#) The situation may have somewhat improved in subsequent months, as the Thai government moved to a more “liberal” anti-Communist policy.
- [34.](#) Norman Peagam, “Letter from Vientiane,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 May 1977. No aid donor countries offered to supply the DDT required for malaria control after the U.S. aid cut-off. Peagam adds that the health problem is exacerbated by efforts to encourage hill tribes to move down to the lowlands in order to conserve the forests and “sending civil servants into the countryside for political seminars and manual work.”
- [35.](#) Among them, Thai journalists, accurately for once. Theh Chongkhadikij, “Fears of Imminent Famine in Laos,” *Bangkok Post* (1 March 1977), reporting the fear of “ambassador-level sources in Vientiane” that Laos faces starvation within a few months, largely because of the drought. Similar fears have been repeatedly expressed in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.
- [36.](#) For a review of some of these, see *At War with Asia*, chapter 3.
- [37.](#) “Drought Worsens Laotian Plight” (see footnote 32).
- [38.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Lao-Thai gulf is still wide,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 August 1977.
- [39.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Laos Gears up for Rural Progress,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 April 1977.
- [40.](#) Nayan Chanda, “Putting the pieces back together,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 December 1977. See Branfman, *op. cit.*, for the view from the wrong end of the guns.
- [41.](#) Properly, Chanda places the word “secret” in quotes. As we have seen, the “secrecy” was a matter of decision by the Free Press.
- [42.](#) Recall that the bombing in the Plain of Jars had nothing to do with North Vietnamese supply trails, as loyal correspondents for the *New York Times* and other specimens of the *Free Press* continue to pretend. Rather, its purpose was to destroy a civilian society

that was undergoing a mild social revolution. See the references of notes 3 and 4.

[43](#). “War Hangover in Laos.” (See footnote 14).

[44](#). *Los Angeles Times* (1 March 1976). (See footnote 14).

6 Cambodia

1. We would like to thank Stephen Reder, Ben Kiernan, Torben Retbøll, Laura Summers, Serge Thion and Michael Vickery for important information and very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

During the period of this review—mid-1975 to the end of 1978—the regime used the name “Democratic Kampuchea.” With some misgivings, we will continue to use the conventional English spelling, “Cambodia,” throughout. Again with misgivings, we will use the term “Khmer Rouge” to refer to the revolutionary movement of Cambodia and to the regime during the period of our review. See Volume I, chapter 1, note 56.

2. François Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978; a revised and updated translation of his *Cambodge: année zéro*, Julliard, 1977, which became perhaps the most influential unread book in recent political history after a review by Jean Lacouture, to which we return. It is also unusual in that it is the only recent French book on Cambodia to have been not only widely quoted and misquoted, but also translated. In contrast, important French studies of the colonial period and the U.S. intervention have gone unreviewed, unnoticed and untranslated, as was the case with Lacouture’s book on Vietnam, mentioned above: for example, Charles Meyer, *Derrière le sourire Khmer*, Plon, 1971; Jean-Claude Pomonti and Serge Thion, *Des courtisans aux partisans*, Gallimard, 1971 (for some discussion of these books, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, chapter 2). Ponchaud, a French priest who lived in Cambodia for ten years, is the best-informed and most careful of those who have done extensive critical work on postwar Cambodia, though his study is not without serious flaws. For tens of millions of readers in the United States and throughout the world, the major source of information is no doubt John Barron and Anthony Paul, *Murder of a Gentle Land: the Untold Story of Communist Genocide in Cambodia*, Reader’s Digest Press, Crowell, 1977, expanded from an article in the *Reader’s Digest*, February 1977. Subsequent references to Ponchaud will be to the U.S. edition cited above, unless explicitly noted. We stress that references are to the U.S., not the British edition, which differs in crucial respects, as we shall see.

3. We will return to a few examples. As one indication of the power of the U.S. propaganda system, consider a study of the “Ten Best Censored Stories of 1977” described as “a nationwide media research project” with “a panel often nationally recognized individuals”; one of us (Chomsky) was among them, along with journalist Shana Alexander, Ben Bagdikian of the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, Nicholas Johnson (chairman of the National Citizens Communications Lobby), Victor Marchetti (former CIA agent who has written important exposés of the intelligence system) and other well-known journalists, writers, and media specialists. The panel selected “Massacre in Cambodia and Vietnam” as one of the ten best censored stories (news release, Office of Public Affairs, Sonoma State College, 9 August 1978). Putting aside any question as to the facts of the matter, this story does not even merit consideration in a study of “censorship,” given the actual media coverage.
4. We do not want to imply that this is the only reason why journalists sought out dissenting opinion. In the case of Cambodia, as in the other cases we have discussed, there remains a current of honest journalism though it is often buried under the avalanche of propaganda.
5. *Ponchaud*, Author’s note for the American translation, dated 20 September 1977, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.
6. For example, Morton Kondracke, “How Much Blood Makes a Bloodbath?” *New Republic*, 1 October 1977: “Perhaps the United States does bear some responsibility [note the admirable caution], but the doves themselves had better explain why similar things haven’t happened in Vietnam... .” Why is it the responsibility of those who opposed the U.S. intervention that converted a civil struggle into a murderous war to “explain” the consequences that ensued?
7. *Dissent*, Fall 1978. Evidently, the question can be raised only if one accepts two assumptions: 1) the U.S. intervention in Indochina would have prevented a Cambodian bloodbath or was designed for this purpose; 2) the United States has the right to use force and violence to prevent potential crimes—and thus, *a fortiori*, to resort to force to prevent actual crimes by invading Indonesia, much of Latin America, etc. It is difficult to decide which of the two assumptions that are jointly required for the question even to be raised is the more absurd.
8. *Human Rights in Cambodia*, Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives,

Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, 3 May 1977 (henceforth, *May Hearings*), p. 40; see also the Hearing before the same subcommittee, 26 July 1977 (henceforth, *July Hearings*). *Government Printing Office*, Washington, 1977.

9. See his prepared statement, *July Hearings*, pp. 19-32. See also George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter, *Cambodia: Starvation & Revolution*, Monthly Review Press, 1976.
10. In fact, Pike is a State Department propagandist whose effusions are often simply embarrassing. For some examples, see Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, pp. 365-66.
11. AP, *Boston Globe*, 22 August 1978. See also *Washington Post*, August 22; editorial, *Boston Globe*, August 23, reprinted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, August 28; *Wall Street Journal*, August 22 and editorial August 23; William F. Buckley, *Boston Globe*, 29 August 1978. The *New York Times* was on strike and not publishing.
12. *Congressional Record*, 22 August 1978, S 14019.
13. McGovern introduced the transcript into the *Congressional Record*, August 22, S 14020.
14. *Congressional Record*, 25 August 1978, S 14397.
15. We choose a factor of a hundred for illustration because of Jean Lacouture's observation, to which we return, that it is a question of secondary importance whether the number of people killed was in the thousands or hundreds of thousands.
16. See note 53, this chapter. Given the wording McGovern used, it is likely that his actual source was a widely quoted allegation by Jean Lacouture that the regime was "systematically massacring, isolating and starving" the population and had "boasted" of having killed some 2 million people. See the reference of note 17. As we shall see, even after Lacouture published a correction, stating that there was no basis for the latter charge, it continues to be reiterated by people who are aware of the correction, along with his more general claim, for which he also provided no evidence that withstands inquiry.
17. See his "The bloodiest revolution," *New York Review of Books*, 31 March 1977, a review of Ponchaud's *Cambodge: année zéro*, translated from *Le Nouvel Observateur*. See also his "Cambodia: Corrections," *New York Review*, 26 May 1977. Also his review of Barron-Paul, *New York Times Book Review*, 11 September 1977.
18. Ponchaud, *op. cit.*, p. xvi. His estimate of refugees is conservative as compared with

some others. We noted earlier a recent estimate of 14,000 Cambodians in Thai refugee camps (others have already been resettled) in addition to an alleged 150,000 who have fled to Vietnam. According to Vietnamese sources, there have been 330,000 refugees and displaced persons from Cambodia since April 1975, including 170,000 of Vietnamese origin, almost all women, children and older people (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Information Note, Hanoi, 31 July 1978). Based indirectly on this source, the U.S. press has given estimates of 500,000 refugees from Cambodia (Editorial, *Boston Globe*, 23 August 1978; the record will show that Hanoi sources have rarely been given such credence and publicity; in this case, the journal was unaware of the original source.) On the exodus of Vietnamese refugees from Cambodia, see Laura Summers, “Human Rights in Cambodia,” paper delivered at the International Studies Association, Washington, D.C., February 1978. She estimates that the Vietnamese population of Cambodia was about 450,000 before the war in 1970 and 310,000 were expelled or fled (along with 20,000 detained) during “the racist campaign against Vietnamese Kampuchians by Lon Nol’s ‘Khmer Republic’” (her source is the well-known demographer Jacques Migotzi, *Cambodge: faits et problèmes de population*, CNRS, Paris, 1973). See T.D. Allman, cited in Volume I, chapter 3, note 20. Note that this exodus of over 300,000 people during the racist campaign by the government backed by the United States has been quietly absorbed by the propaganda system, and that Lon Nol is now apparently offered as a serious source for allegations backing a proposal for military intervention in Cambodia. We return to Lon Nol’s earlier exploits.

[19.](#) See chapter 2, section 2.

[20.](#) Ponchaud, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

[21.](#) Henry Kamm, “Cambodians, Held in Thai Police Cages for Illegal Entry, Await Future Apathetically,” *New York Times*, 10 May 1978. See also note 170 of this chapter. On Kamm’s Pulitzer Prize, see p. 58, above.

[22.](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

[23.](#) *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

[24.](#) To be precise, Porter cites a similar comment from their *Reader’s Digest* article, where they write that the “promising subjects” were selected with the “guidance” of the camp leader. *May Hearings*, p. 23.

[25.](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

- [26.](#) Richard C. Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, *July Hearings*, p. 23.
- [27.](#) *July Hearings*, p. 6.
- [28.](#) See the discussion in chapter 2, section 1.
- [29.](#) *May Hearings*, p. 22, citing CBS Evening News, 26 January 1976; *Washington Post* (8 April 1977). See also the letter to the *Economist* (London) by Torben Retbøll, 26 August 1978.
- [30.](#) 20 January 1978, in Washington. This is a private group supporting U.S. military build-up.
- [31.](#) *Battleline*, May 1978, publication of the American Conservative Union, featured in an issue devoted to atrocities in Cambodia.
- [32.](#) Excerpts appear in *Worldview*, May 1978.
- [33.](#) *AIM Report*, May 1978, Part II, reprinted as a full-page advertisement in the *Washington Post* (2 June 1978). Accuracy in Media, which publishes the *AIM Report*, is a well-financed right-wing group which is concerned that the media do not adhere to the doctrines of state propaganda with sufficient loyalty, and under the guise of defending “accuracy” exerts pressures of various kinds to overcome this unfortunate situation. The alleged failure of the media to give sufficient attention to “the Cambodian holocaust” is one of their staples.
- [34.](#) *Le Monde*, 7, 8 September 1977, 25 October 1977. There was, in fact, a CIA-run secret school in Laos for training Cambodian Army guerrillas that was closed down by the agency when a high-ranking officer who was an aide to the brother of Prime Minister Lon Nol was arrested by the Lao police for heroin smuggling. See Alan Dawson, *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, 12 October 1971.
- [35.](#) “Cannibalism in Cambodia doubted,” *Bangkok Post* (24 January 1978).
- [36.](#) Neil Kelly, “Vietnamese refugee walked 350 miles across Cambodia to Thailand,” *London Times* (30 January 1978).
- [37.](#) Note that he should have witnessed or learned directly of the worst excesses. According to Ponchaud, “the early months were those of blackest terror....The executions continued after the early months of the massive purge of the former regime’s civilian and military cadres and the many recalcitrant elements, but they became less frequent and less summary” (pp. 64, 69). Other sources agree, as we shall

see below. Even people who should be ranked among outright propagandists agree that there must have been “some diminution of the killings” (Leo Cherne, *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*; see note 53). Cherne explains this on the grounds that the population had been reduced from 8 to 5 million, so that there were just fewer people left to kill. On his source for the 5 million figure, see note 118.

- [38.](#) *Aftenposten* (Norway), 22 April 1978, translated in FBIS, 28 April 1978, Cambodia, H1-2.
- [39.](#) John Fraser, “Pushy Russian replaces Ugly American,” *Toronto Globe and Mail* (27 November 1978).
- [40.](#) Michael Vickery, personal letter of September 24, 1977, which he has authorized us to cite. In this letter he expresses his pessimism about developments in Cambodia, along with a good deal of skepticism about finding out the truth.
- [41.](#) See, for example, *Wall Street Journal*, editorial (18 July 1978), which offers “Prof. Chomsky’s heroic efforts to disprove the Cambodian bloodbath through textual criticism of witnesses’ statements” as an example of “intellectual levitation” on a par with apologetics for Mao, scholastic debate over the Shaba incursion, or the “passionate” argument of specialists on Africa that “Mau Mau outbreaks in Kenya were a spontaneous response to colonial oppression.” Putting aside these interesting examples, the fact is that apart from letters to journalists who have invented or spread known falsehoods, these “heroic efforts” reduce to the single article cited below (note 100), which notes that refugee reports “must be considered carefully” though “care and caution are necessary” for obvious reasons. No attempt whatsoever was made to “disprove the Cambodian bloodbath.” The article states that “we do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments” cited by experts, of which the more extreme are selected (and distorted) by the press. Furthermore, these perhaps less than heroic efforts contain no specific discussion of witnesses’ statements but rather document falsehoods and misrepresentations by those who have made use of these statements, as well as the continuing efforts by the *Wall Street Journal* and others to devise apologetics for atrocities within the U.S. sphere. Excerpts from a letter correcting these typical falsehoods appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, 7 August.
- [42.](#) See, for example, Norman Peagam, “Good crops and grim terror in Cambodia,” *New Statesman*, 4 August 1978, or his briefer report in the *New York Times* (19 July 1978). Peagam makes the important point that “refugees in Thailand and Vietnam give

virtually identical accounts,” which he reports graphically—and in this case, credibly.

43. As noted above, p. 134, the Free Press preferred to ignore these reports too, though they were certainly known to editors of leading journals.
44. Leo Cherne, “The Terror in Cambodia,” *Wall Street Journal* (10 May 1978).
45. Leo Cherne, “Why we can’t withdraw,” *Saturday Review*, 18 December 1965. On a government-sponsored study of how U.S. air and artillery attacks by causing “damages and casualties to the villagers” impel them “to move where they will be safe from such attacks...regardless of their attitude to the GVN,” and the reaction by U.S. officials and apologists, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, pp. 5, 142. In the same article, Cherne observes that “there should be no illusion about the consequences” of “an American withdrawal from Vietnam”: “There will be a bloody purge of the non-Communist leaders and intellectuals.”
46. “Cambodia: Corrections.” See note 17 of this chapter. The significance of his reference to “deciding exactly which person uttered an inhuman phrase” will be explained below.
47. On Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS, see Volume I, chapter 5, section 1.3.
48. As we shall see, the evidence he reported was seriously in error throughout, and the sources on which he relied prove to be quite dubious on further inquiry. Lacouture’s corrections, which were partial and somewhat misleading, were published in the United States when the errors were brought to his attention here, but never in France, where the article originally appeared.
49. See chapter 2, section 2. Recall the estimate by the “victim of the liberation,” Pleyber-Grandjean, that the resistance had massacred 7 million people; quite evidently an exaggeration, though with some factual basis in tens of thousands of killings, but at least not widely disseminated as authoritative in the mass media of France and Germany, and not beyond correction.
50. This quote from Lacouture appears on the cover of the U.S. version of Ponchaud’s *Cambodia: Year Zero*.
51. To illustrate the issues at stake, consider the following example of a very general phenomenon in the industrial West. A U.S. newspaper in 1978 ran a cartoon showing a picture of a confused Nicaraguan citizen with Somoza on one side and a guerrilla with a gun on the other. The caption defined the alternatives he faced: Somoza’s corruption

and oppression on the one hand, “liberation or worse” on the other. It is important in the current phase of the Western system of indoctrination to establish in the popular mind the principle that liberation is a terrible fate for subject peoples, a major reason for the current campaigns of abuse and deceit with regard to Indochina.

52. Or, where possible, on independent evidence as to the credibility of those who present reports and interpretations.
53. Here are some scattered examples. From the *New York Times*: (9 July 1975) editorial “scores genocidal policies of Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge rulers,” comparing them to “Soviet extermination of Kulaks or with Gulag Archipelago” and “says silence by US Cong[ress] members and UN must be broken” (quoted from index); (20 October 1975) editorial with similar content; (27 March 1976) editorial contends that Cambodia is a “vast slave labor camp” ruled by “fanatical Communist leaders”; (12 April 1976) article cites *Time* report that 500,000 Cambodians have perished since April 1975; (3 June 1976) citing a journalist of *France Soir*: “the figure of a million victims since April 17, 1975, the day of the ‘liberation’ of Phnom Penh, is plausible, if not certain”; David A. Andelman (2 May 1977) “The purges that took hundreds of thousands of lives in the aftermath of the Communist capture of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, have apparently ended, for the most part...; (27 July 1977) “Up to 1.2 million people may have been killed under the Communists in Cambodia, a high State Department official said today,” citing Richard Holbrooke, who in fact testified that “Journalists and scholars...guess that between half a million and 1.2 million have *died since 1975*” (our emphasis, *July Hearings*, p. 2); C.L. Sulzberger (27 August 1977): “estimates of the number deliberately slaughtered by the Communist regime run from two hundred thousand to one million”; editorial (3 July 1978): “The estimates are that many hundreds of thousands, perhaps even 2 million Cambodians out of a population of 8 million, have been killed or allowed to die of disease and starvation.” *Christian Science Monitor*: editorial (26 April 1977), “Reports put the loss of life as high as 2 million people out of 7.8 million total”; editorial (31 August 1978) citing State Department officials: “The U.S. government is confident that scores, probably hundreds of thousands of people have been killed.” *Washington Post*, Don Oberdofer (20 April 1978) citing the former minister of Information of the Lon Nol government: “1 million Cambodians have been ‘slaughtered’ and another million ‘appear to have perished from disease and starvation’”; Jack Anderson (2 May 1978): “Competent sources have offered estimates ranging from 1.8 million to 2.5 million...who...have died from mistreatment and execution”; Jack Anderson (3 May 1978): “The death toll from

beatings shootings, starvation and forced labor may have reached 2.5 million victims ...”; Smith Hempstone (7 May 1978): “It appears certain that between 500,000 and 2 million Cambodians...have been executed, starved or worked to death, died of disease or been killed while trying to flee ...” *Boston Globe*: UPI (17 April 1977): “Most foreign experts on Cambodia and its refugees believe at least 1.2 million persons have been killed or have died as a result of the policies of the Communist regime...Some experts...believe as many as 3.5 million people—half of the total population—have been killed or have died in the past two years;” (12 September 1977): Lon Nol reports that “more than 2.5 million Cambodians have been killed since the Communist Khmer Rouge conquered his country.” *Business Week*, 23 January 1978: “As many as 2 million may have died out of a population of 5.5 million.” *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* (TV, 6 June 1978): “In the worst accounts some two million people are said to have been killed by the new Communist regime” (the government specialist Timothy Carney estimated the number of deaths, not by “mass genocide” but by “brutal, rapid change” at “hundreds of thousands”). Many similar examples can be given overseas; to select just two: *Die Zeit*, (23 April 1976): “500,000 to 1.5 million people have died, been executed or starved”; *Izvestia*, (9-10 December 1978) alleging 2 million “executions” in Cambodia (*Le Monde*, 12 December 1978).

We will return to a few other examples of the great many that might be cited from the fall of Phnom Penh to the present.

[54.](#) AP, 22 August 1978. See note 11 of this chapter.

[55.](#) *July Hearings*, pp. 4, 15.

[56.](#) *May Hearings*, pp. 40-41.

[57.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[58.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[59.](#) See Volume I, chapter 3, section 5.4, for discussion of his role.

[60.](#) Kenneth M. Quinn, “Political Change in Wartime: The Khmer Krahom Revolution in Southern Cambodia, 1970-1974,” *Naval War College Review*, Spring 1976.

[61.](#) See note 108, this chapter.

[62.](#) *Le Monde*, 8 September 1977.

[63.](#) Compare the contemptuous remark of another refugee, who complained that “Now all village chiefs are selected from among the poorest and the most illiterate,” cited by

Laura Summers, “Defining the Revolutionary State in Cambodia,” *Current History*, December 1976, from *Le Monde*, 18-19 April 1976. Such comments perhaps give some insight into Twining’s “difficult question.”

64. The same is true of the fierce resistance to the full-scale Vietnamese invasion of December 1978-January 1979. See the preface to this volume. We will keep here to the time frame preceding this invasion, as throughout this chapter. On the border conflicts, see Heder’s articles cited in note 19 of the preface.
65. *Washington Post* (22 August 1978).
66. See note 12 of this chapter.
67. *Philadelphia Inquirer* (7 May 1978).
68. Frederic A. Moritz, “Cambodia’s surprising ‘win’ over Vietnam,” *Christian Science Monitor* (28 March 1978).
69. David Binder, “Cambodia-Vietnam Battles Spur U.S. Concern over ‘Proxy’ War,” *New York Times* (25 December 1978). Note that this analysis, which appeared on the day that Vietnam stepped up its dry season offensive to a full-scale attack with 100,000 troops, appeared well after Vietnamese efforts to establish a Cambodian liberation front, with a program tailored to what are assumed outside of Cambodia to be the needs and concerns of the local population. See Nayan Chanda, “Pol Pot eyes the jungle again,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 December 1978. Chanda points out that “None of the 14-member central committee of the KNUFNS [the Vietnamese-established front]...are nationally known figures.” The one well-known Cambodian whom rumor had associated with KNUFNS, So Phim, “who was earlier reported to be leading anti-Pol Pot resistance, is dead.” Chanda, *FEER*, 26 January 1979. As noted in the preface, the Vietnamese plainly do not believe that the KNUFNS can control the population without an army of occupation that far outnumbered the Pol Pot forces even before the massive Vietnamese assault that is reported to have destroyed a substantial part of the Cambodian army.
70. Recall the experience of Russia during World War I, or even World War II, when Hitler succeeded in raising a substantial army in support of the invasion of Russia and, according to some analysts, might have achieved his ends if Nazi atrocities had not helped organize the massive resistance that played the major role in the ultimate allied victory. Or recall even the experience of Western Europe, where Germany had little difficulty in organizing local support after its conquests.

- [71.](#) *Op. cit.* (see note 11). He is referring to the unwillingness of a refugee who had allegedly seen nine members of his immediate family killed to support a foreign invasion.
- [72.](#) *Op. cit.*, pp. 139-143. Recall some of Henry Kissinger's thoughts on the inability of people of the Third World to comprehend "that the real world is external to the observer" because their "cultures...escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking," leading to a "difference of philosophical perspective" that is "the deepest problem of the contemporary international order." For discussion of these and comparable profundities, see Chomsky, "*Human Rights*" and *American Foreign Policy*, Spokesman, 1978, chapter 1.
- [73.](#) Lewis M. Simons, "Experts list disease as No. 1 killer in Cambodia today," *Washington Post* (24 July 1977). In congressional testimony, Twining questioned Simons's "source on this reevaluation" while agreeing with the contents of this "otherwise excellent article." Specifically, "I am convinced that the number of people who have died from disease and malnutrition has been even greater than those executed" (*July Hearings*, p. 8). On the number killed, he offers the estimate: "Certainly thousands or hundreds of thousands." Twining blames the government of Cambodia for the deaths from disease, claiming that they rejected drugs and medicines. Ponchaud reports that from August 1976, with the resumption of foreign trade, medicines have been imported, along with U.S.-produced DDT, including antimalaria drugs sent in 1976 from the AFSC (pp. 94-97, 116). See also the corrections to Twining's statement by Richard Holbrooke, *July Hearings*, p. 16; also the references of note 250, below.
- [74.](#) *July Hearings*, p. 2.
- [75.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- [76.](#) *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*; see note 53.
- [77.](#) See Poole's remarks on the evacuation, p. 176 above.
- [78.](#) *New York Times* (9 May 1975).
- [79.](#) *New York Times* (14 July 1975).
- [80.](#) This is one of the arguments offered by Cambodian authorities for the forced evacuation of the urban centers. The second reason regularly advanced is the fear of CIA-backed subversion by groups left in Phnom Penh (cf. Ponchaud, *op. cit.*, p. 19,

citing a statement of September, 1975). These reasons are continually rediscovered by the U.S. press: e.g., *New York Times* (29 July 1978), reporting that “for the first time” the government alleged that “the revolutionaries considered the city to be full of agents, ammunition dumps and conspiracies to undermine the new regime, and therefore felt total evacuation to be necessary for defense.” The second argument has more force than is commonly alleged. See Snepp, *Decent Interval*, pp. 339-40, who reports that the evacuation “left American espionage networks throughout the country broken and useless.” As for the first motive, Ponchaud disputes it. We return to his reasons below, 313.

[81.](#) See note 9 of this chapter. Quotes are from pp. 25-29. See pp. 30f. on the U.S. role in the politics of starvation for the mass of the population while the elite pursued the good life.

[82.](#) *May Hearings*, p. 30. Porter cites a U.S. intelligence study on Cambodia leaked to the press by Henry Kissinger, discussed in the *Washington Post* (23 June 1975) and *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 July 1975. A U.S. AID report of April 1975 concluded that widespread starvation was imminent and “Slave labor and starvation rations for half the nation’s people...will be a cruel necessity for this year, and general deprivation and suffering will stretch over the next two or three years ...” William Shawcross, *Sideshow*. Simon & Schuster, 1979, p. 375.

[83.](#) On this matter, Laura Summers comments (*op. cit.*, see note 63): “By all accounts, however, universal conscription for work prevented a postwar famine.” This appeared in December, 1976. Perhaps by now one should write “by all serious accounts,” or at least the vast majority of them. We have already cited Poole and Simons (with Twining’s concurrence). Comparable judgments from sources by no means sympathetic with the regime will be noted below.

[84.](#) “McGovern the Hawk,” *Wall Street Journal* (23 August 1978). Note that it is only the end of the Indochina campaign that was “sordid,” and that the *Journal* feels no need to observe the injunction of silence, after its disgraceful record of subservience to state power and apologetics for barbarism. Note also the suggestion of the editors that it was the critics who took us through the painful contortions of the Vietnam war, not the war managers. The *Journal* also pretends that the silence of the activists is of their own choice, rather than a case of simple refusal of access by the mass media.

[85.](#) One of us (Chomsky) was approached by *Time* in the preparation of this article in a transparent effort to elicit a favorable comment from a “supporter of the Khmer

Rouge.” Instead, *Time* was offered a (very partial) record of fabrications with regard to Cambodia for which *Time* and other journals are responsible.

86. In his review of U.S. wartime journalism, Peter Braestrup comments that “In 1962-66, ...*Time* policy on Vietnam was hawkish, even euphoric” (*Big Story Volume I*, Westview Press, 1977, p. 45). While this study contains so many errors that little in it can be assumed to be true, in this case Braestrup is correct. See the references of note 22, chapter 2 of this volume. Later, *Time* policy was no longer euphoric, though it remained hawkish.

87. Richard Dudman, “The Cambodian ‘People’s War,’” *Washington Post* (24 April 1975).

88. Richard Dudman, *Forty Days with the Enemy*, Liveright, 1971. He reported here that “the bombing and shooting was radicalizing the people of rural Cambodia and was turning the countryside into a massive, dedicated, and effective revolutionary base,” p. 69, referring to the U.S. attack, an insight that has been rapidly forgotten and is in fact denied in some of the more disreputable literature on postwar Cambodia.

89. Lewis M. Simons, “The Unknown Dimensions of the Cambodian Tragedy,” *Washington Post* (19 February 1978).

90. It is worth noting that the northwestern areas were then subject to Thai-supported anti-Communist guerrilla sabotage activities (see Stephen Heder, “Thailand’s Relations with Kampuchea: Negotiation and Confrontation along the Prachinburi-Battambang Border,” mimeographed, Cornell University, December 1977). An internal Amnesty International paper of 14 June 1976 notes that in that region “there are still many aspects of civil war.” During the period 1972-75 parts of this region were under Thai military domination in part sanctioned by agreements with the Lon Nol government, and there were also instances of land grabbing. The Thai had also annexed and plundered the region in collaboration with Japanese fascism in 1941-45. We are indebted to Laura Summers for this information. The CIA-supported Khmer Serei also operated in this area from Thai bases for many years. As we shall see below, Lon Nol conducted brutal attacks on the peasants of the region in the early 1950s. Thus there is a long historical background that helps explain why this region should be the focus of violent revenge.

91. *July Hearings*, p.22.

92. Cf. Poole, p. 176, above, and the evidence cited on pp. 182f.

93. See the *Economist* (London) 21 October 1978, reviewing the effects of the floods in

Southeast Asia: “As usual, there is no reliable information about what goes on inside Cambodia, but agricultural experts say it could be the worst hit of all. At one time, most of the country looked like a gigantic lake. Much of the vast Tonle Sap-Mekong basin is still under water. There seems little doubt that the waters have brought new hardships to this unhappy country.” To the surprise of most observers, the grim prediction does not appear to have been realized, though we have yet to read a comment on this fact or its import in the major media.

[94](#). See p. 239 below. Also, *FEER Asia 1979 Yearbook*.

[95](#). Presumably, he has in mind Lacouture’s remark on the relative insignificance of a factor of a hundred and his original allegation that the regime had “boasted” of having killed some 2 million people.

[96](#). During the U.S. war in Vietnam, it was common for reporters and others to comment on the curious “xenophobia” of the Vietnamese, which makes it so hard to deal with them. Apparently it is a curious trait of peasant culture, as yet unexplained by contemporary scholarship, to react with a demonstration of xenophobia when foreign powers drop cluster bombs on villages after many years of colonial domination. Yet another aspect of the mysterious Asian mind.

[97](#). See below, p. 250.

[98](#). Berkeley, 25 April 1977.

[99](#). Douglas Z. Foster, “Photos of ‘horror’ in Cambodia: fake or real?” *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1978. No date is given. Foster also reviewed the basic facts briefly in *More* (February 1978).

[100](#). N. Chomsky and E.S. Herman, “Distortions at Fourth Hand,” *Nation*, 25 June 1977.

[101](#). We are concentrating on fabrications and distortions in the U.S. press, but it should be noted that the phenomenon is worldwide. For some documentation on fabrications in the French press and television, which elicited no comment or explanation when they were exposed, see Pierre Rousset, “Cambodia: Background to the Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1977. See also note 48.

Another example is a widely published photo taken by the West German journalist Christopher Maria Froder, showing a Khmer Rouge soldier brandishing a weapon, according to the photographer, to prevent looting of shops in Phnom Penh after its liberation on 17 April 1975. The picture appeared in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*,

14 April 1978, with the caption “Khmer Rouge takeover: Savage Repression.” The *Review* refused to publish a letter by Torben Retbøll noting that after the photo had appeared in *Die Welt* (West Germany, 9 May 1975) with the claim that the soldier was looting, and in *Der Stern* (29 April 1976) with the caption: “After the victory, there followed the revenge against the rich,” the photographer protested the falsification on German TV (the facts were correctly reported in the West German *Befreiung*). But on 15 August 1976, the *Sunday Telegraph* (London) again published the photo as an illustration of Khmer Rouge brutality as did *Newsweek* in the issue just cited. Retbøll’s appeared in *News from Kampuchea (Australia)*, vol. 2, no. 2, November/December 1978, to an international audience of 500 people. The same picture appeared in the *Washington Post* (9 May 1975, with the caption: “Khmer Rouge soldier angrily orders Phnom Penh shopkeepers into streets”), and again in the *New York Times Magazine* (Henry Kamm, “The Agony of Cambodia,” 19 November 1978), this time with the caption: “Conquering Phnom [sic] Penh in 1975, a Khmer Rouge soldier rounds up merchants,” illustrating that a good piece of propaganda never dies.

[102](#). There are many others. For example, one of the fabricated photographs appears in the Soviet journal *Literaturnaja Gazeta*, 4 October 1978, in an article devoted to atrocities in Cambodia that quotes extensively from the U.S. press. Torben Retbøll has informed us of a number of Western European examples: *Der Spiegel*, 30 January 1978, who refused to print a letter of correction, like their U.S. counterparts; the Danish journal *Ekstra Bladet*, on three separate occasions (3 May 1976, 28 December 1977, and 4 January 1978); the *London Observer* (30 October 1977) on the front page.

[103](#). George Orwell, “Notes on nationalism,” 1945. In Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. III, Harcourt Brace & World, 1968, p. 371.

[104](#). Communiqué du Ministre de l’information et de la propagande (*Hu Nim*), 31 March 1976. Hildebrand and Porter (op. cit., p. 70) cite a government report of 15 April 1976 alleging that several hundred thousand draught animals were killed in rural areas. Whatever the actual numbers may be, they are surely not small. As we have seen, the same is true throughout Indochina.

[105](#). Ponchaud, op. cit., p. 55. See also chapter 5, on similar conditions in Laos.

[106](#). *New York Times* (14 June 1976).

[107](#). Op. cit., p. 340n. As noted earlier, this is only one of several cases where Snep

offers evidence based on what may very well be intelligence fabrications.

[108](#). Richard Holbrooke informed the Congressional Committee in the *July Hearings that Twining*, Carney and Kenneth Quinn, “form to my mind, the American core of expertise on Cambodian affairs today in the U.S. Government” (p. 2). As we shall see, Quinn also refers to this alleged interview, and may well be the source of its wide dissemination. Twining, when asked what public statements the Cambodian government has made about executions, replied: “The little that has been said publicly, when Khieu Samphan was in Colombo, for example ...” (p. 12). It is not clear whether he is referring to the “interview” or to Khieu Samphan’s statements at the Colombo meetings. Thus of the three specialists who form “the American core of expertise on Cambodian affairs today in the U.S. Government,” two cite this “interview” as genuine, perhaps three, depending on what Twining had in mind in this reference.

[109](#). *July Hearings*, p. 22.

[110](#). 1 May 1977.

[111](#). Barron and Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 202. In their article in the *Reader’s Digest*, February 1977, the story is reported slightly differently. For a full discussion of the various versions and their authenticity, see Torben Retbøll, “Cambodia—the Story of a False Interview,” unpublished ms., 1978. Retbøll, a Danish historian, is one of the small number of people in the West who care enough about the facts to pursue the details and write to journals that print false or dubious information, and like others, has been regularly subjected to vilification and abuse for this unwelcome commitment to the truth.

[112](#). This was a personal letter to Chomsky commenting on the article cited in note 100.

[113](#). Barron says: “Ponch [sic] assisted us extensively in our interviews in France. He compared data with us, criticized our work, and challenged in some cases our findings.” *May Hearings*, p. 48. Paul cites a letter from his research colleague on the book who claims to have been “in almost daily contact with Father Ponchaud.” (*FEER*, letter, 9 December 1977). We cannot comment on the authenticity of these remarks for reasons discussed below.

[114](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. xvi. Ponchaud cites one of these letters in his note for the American translation, p. xiii. See below, p. 318.

[115](#). See p. 158, above.

[116.](#) William Shawcross, “The Third Indochina War,” *New York Review of Books*, 6 April 1978.

[117.](#) See among others, Ieng Sary (interviewed in *Der Spiegel*, 9 May 1977, by Tiziano Terzani), who estimated the population at 7,760,000 and explicitly denied the reports by Barron-Paul and others of massacres (it is curious that one constantly reads that the Cambodian government had not denied these claims). In the *May Hearings*, after Porter had questioned the *Famiglia Cristiana* “interview” (noting that the Cambodian government has repeatedly estimated the population at 7.7 million), John Barron attempted to defend his use of the alleged interview, with the following claims: (1) “other Cambodian officials at approximately the same time had stated that there were 5 or 5.2 million inhabitants of Cambodia”; (2) “The figure of 7.7 million mentioned by Mr. Porter I have seen stated one time, and that was in a claim made shortly after the first anniversary of the revolution” denying massacre claims; (3) “I don’t know of anybody in the world who has ever contended that the population of Cambodia ever was that large.” As for (1), Barron cites no examples and we know of none. As for (2), he was probably referring to the Ministry of Information communique cited in note 104, which estimated the population at 7.7 million, a figure that has been repeated often. But the most surprising claim is (3). Ponchaud, Barron’s major nongovernmental source, writes that “in 1970 the population of Cambodia was usually estimated at 8 million” (including 400,000 Vietnamese); *op. cit.*, p. 70. The UN estimated the population in mid-1974 at 7.89 million (see below, p. 264) and in mid-1976 at 8.35 million (cf. *UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, February 1978). Swedish visitors to postwar Cambodia have reported that the population is 8 million and that efforts are being made to increase it to 15 million. Estimates in the 7-8 million range are standard. In their book, Barron and Paul write that “no one heretofore had contended that the prewar population of Cambodia was more than seven million ...” (p. 202n.)

[118.](#) It has also been cited on television, e.g., by Leo Cherne of the International Rescue Committee, on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* (see note 53). He claims that when Khieu Samphan “was asked what is the population of Cambodia, he said five million. The population of Cambodia used to be 8 million.” Cherne notes that this estimate of five million is inconsistent with a population estimate offered by Pol Pot in “Peiping” (the name used for Peking by Dean Rusk, Leo Cherne and others of their political persuasion). This “disparity in the population of Cambodia” is offered as the sole example of “the most remarkable revelations” by Pol Pot. It is, of course, only a “remarkable revelation” to someone who relies on such sources as *Famiglia Cristiana*

for his knowledge of international affairs. Recall that it is this “remarkable revelation” that Cherne relied upon to explain why executions have diminished (see note 37, this chapter). The above appears to be the intended sense of some rather confused remarks by Cherne. We rely on the written transcript, Library no. 702, Show no. 3242, 6 June 1978.

[119.](#) *Economist* (London), 26 February 1977.

[120.](#) *FEER*, 23 September 1977.

[121.](#) Kenneth M. Quinn, “Cambodia 1976: Internal Consolidation and External Expansion,” *Asian Survey*, January 1977. Torben Retbøll has brought to our attention that in this article, Quinn claims that Khieu Samphan “offered a partial explanation” for the reduction in population on grounds of war dead and the return of “600,000 ethnic Vietnamese” to Vietnam. But in fact nothing of the sort appears in the cited “interview.” If this “interview” is indeed an intelligence fabrication, as appears not unlikely, it may be that it went through several versions before being placed in *Famiglia Cristiana*, to be picked up by the world press.

[122.](#) *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

[123.](#) “Cambodia 1977: Gone to Pot,” *Asian Survey*, January 1978.

[124.](#) See Volume I, chapter 3, section 5.4.

[125.](#) To add an unnecessary little extra, the same issue of *Famiglia Cristiana* contains an insert on Sihanouk, referring to “a suspicion, expressed in *Le Monde* August 8, that the entire family of the Prince has been exterminated.” Retbøll (*op. cit.*) points out that the reference is to a fabricated “appeal” published in good faith by *Le Monde* with the signatures of well-known French leftists. Two days later, *Le Monde* published an apology when it discovered that the signatures were forged—a fact not mentioned in the *Famiglia Cristiana* report. This fact alone might have suggested that this journal is hardly a trustworthy source, had the question been of any concern.

[126.](#) See chapter 2 of this volume, p. 29-30, for one of many examples. It is difficult to imagine that the CIA, with its long history of deception in Indochina, has suddenly ceased its disinformation campaigns. Ed Bradley of CBS news, asked on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* to comment on the “allegation that there is a disinformation network at work spreading these allegations” of Cambodian atrocities, responded: “I don’t have any doubts that there is some element of truth in it...,” a plausible surmise. The alleged “interview” is not found in the regular FBIS translations though it does

appear in a special “For Official Use Only” supplement to the *Daily Report for Asia and Pacific*. Thus it is not available to regular library subscribers, but presumably is available to selected individuals to whom it can be “leaked.” We are indebted to Stephen Heder for this information.

[127](#). Barron and Paul, *op. cit.*, p.197.

[128](#). 18 February 1976.

[129](#). Paul defends the translation in a letter to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 December 1977, citing the research colleague who claims to have been in almost daily contact with Ponchaud (see note 113, this chapter). He ignores the question of the actual source of this alleged quote, to which we turn directly—something that should have been known to a person in almost daily contact with Ponchaud, who allegedly approved this specific translation.

[130](#). Such claims, for which no specific evidence is offered, are emphatically denied by at least some refugees. See below, p. 243. They are also denied by the State Department’s leading specialist, Charles Twining. See *July Hearings*, p. 21. See also Quinn’s comment on the austerity of the cadres, above, p. 178.

[131](#). *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

[132](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 97 of the French original; see note 2, this chapter.

[133](#). See the references in note 82, this chapter, and the text at note 82.

[134](#). Ponchaud, “Cambodge: deux ans après la libération,” *Revue d’Etudes comparatives Est-Ouest*, Volume 8, no. 7, 1977, pp. 143-156.

[135](#). Ponchaud, *Cambodge Libéré. Dossier no. 13*, Echange France-Asie, January 1976, p. 17.

[136](#). See note 17, this chapter. In *Nouvel Observateur*, 2 October 1978, Lacouture gave the same wording as a quote, attributed to Khmer Rouge cadres: the new generation charged with the building of Cambodia “needs only a million and a half to two million Cambodians to construct the country,” (*his emphasis*). This article is an excerpt from Lacouture’s October 1978 book *Survive le peuple cambodgien!*, Seuil, 1978. As we shall see directly, this reference appears in print over a year after Ponchaud, a close associate of Lacouture’s, had withdrawn the quote and his interpretation of it as apparently without credible source.

Quite apart from the discrepancy of source and the changes in numbers and text (not

to speak of the dubious source, to which we return), it is hardly clear that Khmer Rouge military commanders or whoever might have been the source for this remark, if anyone, “talk of Marxism.” Specialists have noted that the Khmer Rouge leadership tended to stress independence, nationalism, manual labor, equality, etc., but not Marxism. According to Carney, Marxism-Leninism made its appearance in domestic radio broadcasts only in 1976. Timothy M. Carney, “Continuity in Cambodian Communism,” in Carney, ed., *Communist Party Power in Kampuchea* (Cambodia), Data Paper number 106, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, January 1977, p. 23.

[137](#). See note 112, this chapter.

[138](#). See note 2, this chapter.

[139](#). Something unknown in the history of industrialization in the West or elsewhere in the “developing world,” of course.

[140](#). Our emphasis. Penguin, 1978, p. 92.

[141](#). The subsequent (1978) Norwegian translation (*Kambodsja Ar Null*, Tiden Norsk Forlag, p. 84), retains the quote and the implication that the “formidable boast” is being put into execution. This translation was evidently supervised by Ponchaud, since there are some revisions of the French original as well as new material. See note 395, this chapter.

Skepticism about the source of this alleged quote had already been expressed by Gareth Porter (May *Hearings*, pp. 51-52), properly, it is now clear. Ponchaud’s qualifications in his letter regarding the quote are noted by Malcolm Caldwell (*Manchester Guardian*, 8 May 1978). He comments: “Yet, without a move on Ponchaud’s part to correct the misuse, the construction of threatening a systematic massacre is the one still put on it by authors determined to slander Kampuchea at any cost to honesty and integrity.” This comment takes on added weight now that Ponchaud has deleted from the American edition both the “quote” and the inference drawn from it.

[142](#). This passage is given separately in small print, apparently indicating that it is a quote, or standard report of refugees, or something of the sort. *July Hearings*, p. 12.

[143](#). FBIS *Daily Report*, Asia and Pacific, 12 May 78, p. H3.

[144](#). 23 September 1977.

[145](#). This egregious comment is typical of the colonialist mentality. While the friends and associates of Westerners in Phnom Penh may have been “fun-loving” and “easy-going” as they enjoyed themselves at the expense of the peasant population, the latter appear to have endured a rather different existence, a matter to which we return.

[146](#). *FEER*. 25 August 1978. Note that Wise is reviewing the British edition.

[147](#). In the same review, Wise claims that Ponchaud dismisses the excuse that Phnom Penh was emptied to avoid famine as “rubbish” because “there was enough stocked rice to feed between 2.5 million and three million people ...” Compare what Ponchaud actually wrote: This explanation for the evacuation, “given as the essential one, is not fully convincing.” The “more than 1.5 million peasants” who had been driven into Phnom Penh “were all eager to return to their homes without being forced to go” and as for the rest of the population, stocks of rice on hand “might have fed it for two months, with careful rationing” (at which point, presumably, they would have starved to death). *Op. cit.*, pp. 20-21. Note further that on inquiry Ponchaud concedes that his estimate may have been exaggerated. See below, p. 312. But for Wise, Ponchaud has shown the explanation to be “rubbish.” This explanation was, as Ponchaud states, commonly given as the essential one. See the comments by Ieng Sary, reported from Tokyo, AP, *Washington Post* (14 June 1978) for one example.

Wise also makes the following curious remark: Ponchaud “eloquently smothers the naive theories of alleged experts who—even *before Ponchaud’s book appeared*—had decided there were no massacres after the communists took Phnom Penh in 1975 ...” (his emphasis). He cites no such “experts.” Note also Wise’s curious implication that prior to the appearance of Ponchaud’s book in January 1977 it was somehow illegitimate to draw conclusions—at least, the unauthorized ones—about Cambodia.

[148](#). See note 136, this chapter.

[149](#). AP, “UN chief invited to Cambodia,” *Christian Science Monitor*. (14 October 1978). See also Frederic A. Moritz, “Critics crack Cambodia’s closed door,” *ibid.*, 16 October 1978, noting also the visit of a “left-wing China-oriented Hong Kong” newspaper reporter in September, one of the many whose reports received no coverage in the Western media.

[150](#). See *New York Times*, 7 March 1976, and for a review, Laura Summers, “Defining the Revolutionary State in Cambodia.” Cambodia circulated photographs of the incident, but they do not seem to have been published in the U.S. press, which much prefers

faked photos produced by Thai intelligence to illustrate alleged Khmer Rouge atrocities. See Heder, "Thailand's Relations with Kampuchea," pp. 27-28, 77-79 (cited in note 90, above).

[151](#). Ross H. Munro, "Envoy Touring Cambodia Finds a No-Wage System," *New York Times*, (9 March 1976), dateline Peking.

[152](#). Elsewhere, he is quoted more positively as saying that he had seen "enormous numbers of children who looked quite healthy and quite lively." *Toronto Globe and Mail*, (8 March 1976), cited by Porter in the *May Hearings*, p. 28. In the *Times* account he is quoted as saying, in response to a query about starvation: "How can I judge? I saw no signs of starvation."

[153](#). Number 2, 1976. We quote from the German translation in *Befreiung*, June 1976.

[154](#). Similar impressions can be derived from a reading of Ponchaud's book, though rarely from the secondary references.

[155](#). The official Cambodian government estimate was 200,000. See Ieng Sary's interview in *Spiegel* (cited in note 117.) It is probable that this estimate was intended to include the suburbs, which according to visitors were more populated than the city itself.

[156](#). Recall that according to Ponchaud's 1978 book, the worst terror was over by the time of Lundvik's trip; see note 37.

[157](#). *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia, 30 December 1977); cited in *News from Kampuchea*, Vol. I, no. 5, December 1977. The Committee of Patriotic Kampuchians, which published the journal, at that time included Ben Kiernan, an Australian specialist on Cambodia; Shane Tarr, a New Zealander who lived in Cambodia until April 1975; and a group of Cambodians in Australia, three of whom lived in areas under Khmer Rouge administration in 1970 and 1975. In keeping with the theory of the Free Press, it was not subject to censorship and the information it presented about Cambodia was available to the Western reader, journalists included. In further confirmation of the same theory, its documentation and positive accounts of postwar Cambodia reached an audience of about 500 people throughout the world.

[158](#). Both on 23 January 1978.

[159](#). Henry Kamm, *New York Times* (3 February 1978).

[160](#). Lewis M. Simons, "Cambodians Reported to be Well-Fed," *Washington Post*, (28 April 1976).

[161](#). See note 40 of this chapter.

[162](#). 19 May 1978.

[163](#). The text appears in *News From Kampuchea*, vol. 2, no. 1, May 1978.

[164](#). SWB, Far East, 5801/B, 3-9, 29 April 1978.

[165](#). Michael Dobbs, “The New Cambodia: Phones, TV, Cars on Rubble Heaps,” *Washington Post*, (23 March 1978).

[166](#). AP, *Boston Globe* (29 March 1978).

[167](#). See the reference in note 198 below and Ponchaud, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

[168](#). *Cambodge*, published by the Ministry of Information of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 1962, p. 116.

[169](#). “Yugoslavs, After Rare Tour, Tell of a Primitive Cambodia,” 24 March 1978.

[170](#). Henry Kamm, “Cambodian Refugees Depict Growing Fear and Hunger,” *New York Times*, 13 May 1978. As both the *Post and Times* correctly reported, the Yugoslav journalists said they saw no signs of food shortages. Once again Kamm notes that some of the refugees he interviewed were in a “small cage” in a police station, others in a “disused prison” and refugee camps, where “their bearing and comportment recall concentration camp survivors in the Europe of 1945”—a fact that conceivably relates to the conditions of their detention. See p. 162 above.

[171](#). The same “implicit restrictions” prevented them from raising questions about atrocities, he explains. Kamm’s remarks on “communist fraternalism” are no doubt appropriate, though Yugoslavia has been known on occasion to exhibit some slight degree of independence, one recalls. But more to the point, Kamm neglects to mention the “implicit restrictions” imposed by “capitalist fraternalism.” For example, those that enable a Pulitzer-Prize winning specialist on the misery of refugees to inform his reading public that refugees in Timor are fleeing from the mountains where they have been “forced to live” by FRETILIN guerrillas; this apparently on the authority of a kindly Indonesian general, not—perish the thought—interviews with refugees. Unlike Cambodian refugees in Thai prisons, these unlucky souls are not proper subjects for a reporter of such independence of mind. See Volume I, chapter 3, section 5.4.

[172](#). William Shawcross also reports that “The Yugoslav journalists were shocked by the extent of child labor,” and reports the same account of the filming. “Cambodia Today: a Land of Blood and Tears,” *New Times*, 13 November 1978. The subheading of this

story (which is featured on the front cover) includes the statement that “Cambodia today is a ‘hell on earth.’” As the story itself indicates, this is a quote from Hanoi radio, which has rarely been regarded as a reliable source in Western journalism, but is taken quite seriously when it provides negative information about Cambodia in the midst of a bitter war. See note 18, above.

The concern of Western journalists over child labor is rather selective. A rare report on the topic filed from Thailand received little publicity in the United States and aroused no noticeable outrage: Amport Tantuvanich, AP, “Slavery the fate of these children,” *Boston Globe* (24 September 1978). The report describes children working in Thai factories “hour after hour without a break around furnaces that generate 1450-degree heat. Their arms and hands bear scars from burns and cuts...” There are tens of thousands of illegally employed children, some “sold by their parents to factory owners” and working as “virtual slaves.” “A recent survey by the International Labor Organization in Geneva showed that of 52 million children under age 15 at work around the world, 29 million are working in South Asia.” Many of the Thai laborers are under 10. “Labor specialists say that a combination of wide-open free enterprise and a lack of labor-union power contributes to the child labor problem. Under laws laid down by Thailand’s military government, strikes and other labor union activities are forbidden.” On the U.S. role in creating this situation, see Volume I, chapter 4, section 2. See also the preface to this volume.

Another example is the notable exploitation of child labor from the occupied territories in Israel. At the “Children’s Market at the Ashkelon junction” one finds children aged six or seven trucked in by labor contractors at 4 a.m. to work on the private or collective farms in the vicinity, helping to make the desert bloom for their prosperous employers who pay them “a meager subsistence wage” though “often they are cheated even on that.” Ian Black, “Peace or no peace, Israel will still need cheap Arab labor,” *New Statesmen*, 29 September 1978. The miserable conditions of child labor (and Arab labor from the occupied territories in general) have been discussed and deplored in Israel (see, for example, Amos Elon, “Children’s market at the Ashkelon junction,” *Ha’aretz*, 2 August 1978), with no effect on the practice, however. The matter has yet to be discussed in the mainstream U.S. press, to our knowledge, surely not by those who are so deeply offended by child labor in Cambodia, a major atrocity that evokes memories of Hitler and Stalin.

Visiting Cambodia in the summer of 1978, Gunnar Bergstrom reports that he saw

children working in the fields, mixing work with play in a manner not unfamiliar in peasant societies. See note 180, below. See also the reports cited in note 190, below.

[173.](#) François Rigaux, “Un socialisme à la spartiate: le Kampuchéa démocratique,” mimeographed, Centre Charles de Visscher pour le droit internationale, Collège Thomas More, Louvain, 1978.

[174.](#) Denzil Peiris, “Phnom Penh’s long march back,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 October 1978. See the *Asia 1979 Yearbook* for further discussion of “the apparent achievements of Cambodian agriculture.”

[175.](#) There were Third World visitors, but their reports are unknown or discounted. Several reports can be found in *News from Kampuchea*. See also Summers, “Defining the Revolutionary State in Cambodia.” See also note 149 of this chapter.

[176.](#) “US Leftist Editor Says Cambodians Are Thriving,” *New York Times* (12 May 1978). Six months later, a column by Burstein appeared on the Op-Ed page of the *Times* (“On Cambodia: But, Yet,” 21 November 1978), two days after the *New York Times Magazine* published a major story by Henry Kamm, to which we return. Burstein’s brief statement based on what he says he saw is “opinion”; Kamm’s lengthy account of what he says he heard from refugees is “fact.” Professor David Sidorsky of Columbia University denounced the *Times* for printing this “propagandistic opinion on questions of fact,” (letter, 5 December). He did not criticize the *Times* for publishing Kamm’s article with its faked photos, allegations about starvation taking no account of direct testimony to the contrary by visitors, etc. Nor did he criticize the *Times* for withholding evidence provided by visitors. Rather, his criticism was limited to the Burstein Op-Ed statement for not presenting factual evidence, as was obviously impossible in the space provided him.

In contrast to the coverage in the United States, visits by Danish Communists received substantial publicity in the Danish press, we are informed by Torben Retbøll. (Note that some of the visitors whose reports were suppressed in the Free Press were non-Communists, and there is little doubt that they would have been treated rather differently had their reports conformed to the propaganda line.) A detailed report by these visitors appears in *The Call* (P.O. Box 5597, Chicago Ill. 60680), May 15, 22, 29, June 5, 12, 1978; *The Young Communist*, June/July 1978; *Class Struggle*, Summer 1978. There was also a report in the *Guardian* (New York, 7 June 1978). See also *Kampuchea Today*, Call Pamphlets, December 1978, and a “photo-record” of their visit by David Kline and Robert Brown, *The New Face of Kampuchea*. Liberator Press,

1979. They say their trip covered 700 miles with frequent stops and discussions with government leaders and others.

- [177](#). We regret that we cannot comment here on television news, since we have no records. We have cited the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report on Cambodia on the basis of a transcript*. Burstein informs us privately that lower-echelon reporters and editors were helpful and sympathetic, but that the idea was apparently killed at a higher level, a process not exactly unfamiliar to us personally. See the prefatory note to Volume I.
- [178](#). Henry Kamm, "The Agony of Cambodia," *New York Times Magazine*, 19 November 1978. See note 101 on the accompanying illustrations.
- [179](#). See Volume I, chapter 3, section 5.4; this volume, chapter 4. Note that his distortions are systematic; his extreme bias is consistently towards service to the U.S. government propaganda system, whether he is dismissing the testimony of refugees and other victims in Timor and relying on Indonesian generals, or dismissing the testimony of visitors to Cambodia and relying on what he claims to hear from refugees in Thai police cages, or grossly misrepresenting the available evidence from Vietnam.
- [180](#). We rely on an hour-long taped interview in English, readily available to enterprising reporters, no doubt. Bergstrom has a number of interesting things to say, and seems careful and qualified in his account. For example, he visited areas where there was alleged to be insurrection, but saw no signs of disturbance and no security presence. Reports by U.S. journalists to the same effect many months later were front page news. As already noted, the work pace seemed to him moderate by European standards. He gives many details of the life he observed, and in general, reports a peasant society rebuilding with some success from the ruins, noting, however, that his access was limited.
- [181](#). Mary McGrory, "Slow reaction to Cambodia bloodbath," *Boston Globe*, 27 November 1978. As the title indicates, the central point is that "for a while, Cambodia was hardly discussed," though finally, by mid-1978, it is receiving some attention. The statement is totally false, but, as we have seen, in keeping with the constant pretense of writers who send this message to their mass audience in the *Reader's Digest*, TV Guide, and the major journals, or in the more select periodicals.
- [182](#). *Boston Globe*, 19 November 1978. On the same day, the *Globe* reports that "the Inter-American Human Rights Commission yesterday accused the Nicaraguan National Guard of murdering scores of unarmed civilians" in September, charging that "entire

families were machine-gunned to death in their homes,” that unarmed youths “were allegedly forced to dig their own graves before they were executed,” along with other atrocities. This story made page 78. The preceding day a brief AP report noted that “despite pleas from the Nicaraguan opposition the Carter Administration has decided against trying to prevent Israel from supplying light arms to the regime of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle, Administration sources said yesterday.” None of this is major news, however and it elicited no editorial or other comment. On November 18 the *New York Times* reported (also not prominently, and in this case with no descriptive detail at all) that the Commission had accused the Nicaraguan Government “of flagrant, persistent abuses of human rights, including summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention, indiscriminate bombing of unarmed civilians and obstructing the humanitarian efforts of the Red Cross”; the government’s “practices had victimized all sectors of the population but particularly the poor and people between the ages of 14 and 21.” Nothing is said about the long-standing relation between the United States and Nicaragua. See Volume I, chapter 4, section 5.2.

[183.](#) Cf. *Philadelphia Inquirer* (19 November 1978).

[184.](#) See note 130.

[185.](#) The *New York Times* is also not noted for outraged denunciations of gross differences in living standards in the United States. In New York City, for example, one can easily discover wealth that surpasses description only a short distance away from hovels where a grandmother stays awake through the night with a club to prevent rats from killing a child who will go to school the next day without breakfast.

[186.](#) See note 172, above.

[187.](#) It is not clear that he understands what is required to establish his case. See the serious error in logic discussed below, p. 322-23.

[188.](#) Jack Anderson, “Lon Nol in Exile: Sad Symbol of Cambodia,” *Washington Post* (1 October 1978). Some of Lon Nol’s exploits in this “serene little country” in the 1970s are well-known. See, for example, Volume I, chapter 3, section 2. Anderson’s mythical picture of prewar Cambodia is a very common one. Among many examples, an advertisement for a CBS news special on Cambodia reads: “Once, Cambodia was a very special place. Lively, Happy, Peaceful.” *New York Times* (1 June 1978). The myth provides a useful backdrop for the picture of merciless horror and madness. See note 232, below.

- [189](#). Cited in Jack Anderson, “In Cambodia, Obliterating a Culture,” *Washington Post* (2 May 1978).
- [190](#). Richard Dudman published an edited version of his series in a special supplement to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (15 January 1979): “Cambodia: A land in turmoil.” Elizabeth Becker’s series appeared in the *Washington Post*, December 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1978 (along with a December 24 story on Malcolm Caldwell’s assassination in Phnom Penh). These accounts were serialized in many journals in the United States and elsewhere as they appeared in late December. Our quotes from Dudman are from the edited version cited.
- [191](#). Bernard Weinraub, “High-Level Purge in Cambodian Regime Reported,” *New York Times* (29 December 1978). Weinraub attributes this opinion to “American analysts.” *Times* ideologists continued to disregard the reports by the U.S. journalists, just as they had dismissed earlier testimony from reputable non-Communist observers that was unacceptable on doctrinal grounds. Thus Dudman reports that “with good opportunity for observation” he found “an assurance of apparently adequate food” and no signs of malnutrition, confirming the reports of earlier visitors. But for Henry Kamm it is a matter of dogma that Communist policy has caused starvation (“Although the growing of rice was declared the supreme national objective and almost the entire nation was set to work at this task, the Cambodian people, for the first time in their history, learned hunger”—and contradicting himself in the very next sentence: “Until the war disrupted their lives, [hunger] was perhaps the one scourge of life that Cambodians had always been spared,” which is false as well as inconsistent with what precedes). To maintain the dogma with its accompanying “mystery” already noted, it is necessary to ignore the reported facts, as Kamm does, in this article written a month after the accounts by the visiting U.S. journalists were widely circulated. Henry Kamm, “The Cambodian Dilemma,” *New York Times Magazine*, 4 February 1979, an “analysis” with accompanying moral lecture that merits no further comment.
- [192](#). *Livre Noire*, Faits et preuves des actes d’agression et d’annexion du Vietnam contre le Kampuchéa, Phnom Penh, September 1978.
- [193](#). Becker states that the information in the *Livre Noir* “closely paralleled US intelligence estimates” of 1970. We know of no evidence that U.S. intelligence estimated in 1970 that there were 1.5-2 million “Vietcong” in Cambodia. Similarly, much of the other material in it does not parallel U.S. intelligence estimates, at least so far as the public record indicates. See Nayan Chanda, “The Black Book of Hatred,” *Far*

Eastern Economic Review, 19 January 1979, for some discussion of the *Livre Noir* and also of conflicting Vietnamese claims in the two-volume *Kampuchea Dossier* published in Hanoi. See Heder's articles cited in note 19 of the preface to this volume for detailed discussion of the background, including the longstanding conflict between Vietnamese and Cambodian Communists.

[194](#). They do, however, regularly accept documents and assessments produced in Hanoi and Phnom Penh prejudicial to the adversary, in the midst of a bitter conflict, on the principle that any negative information concerning a Communist regime, however questionable the source, must be accurate. See notes 18, 172 of this chapter.

[195](#). Elizabeth Becker, "Inside Cambodia," *Newsweek*, 8 January 1979. Her story deals only with Caldwell's assassination, the border war, the alleged support of the *Livre Noir* for U.S. intelligence estimates, atrocity stories from refugees, and the condition of Angkor Wat. It studiously avoids any report on what she actually observed of life in Cambodia.

[196](#). "Cambodia: Silence, Subterfuge and Surveillance," *Time*, 8 January 1979.

[197](#). See the preface to this volume.

[198](#). David P. Chandler, with Ben Kiernan and Muy Hong Lim, "The Early Phases of Liberation in Northwestern Cambodia: Conversations with Peang Sophi," *Working Papers*, no. 10, Monash University (Melbourne), undated (1976 apparently).

[199](#). We have already commented on the localized nature of atrocity reports noted by a number of analysts, Twining included. Chandler observes that the reason may be that conditions elsewhere are better, or that it is more difficult to escape from other areas. Ponchaud (in his author's note for the English translation) states that most of his reports come from the provinces near the Thai border, though "quite a few came from further away" (p. xv.). In an article published in January 1976 (N.B. after the worst atrocities; see above, note 37), Ponchaud wrote that Battambang-Siem Reap (i.e. the Northwest) is a region of "bloody violence more than any other"; cited by Porter, *May Hearings*, p. 24.

[200](#). See Summer's report, note 63.

[201](#). David P. Chandler, "Transformation in Cambodia," *Commonweal*, 1 April 1977. See also his comments in the *May Hearings* (in part cited above, p. 176-77), where this article appears as a supplement.

[202](#). The French also continually readjusted the border in a manner prejudicial to Cambodia. See the preface to this volume, note 20. On the vicious and barbaric French colonial impact on Vietnam, see the references cited in chapter 4, note 40; also note 67. Matters were little different in Cambodia. Chandler's comments on the mythic "happiness" of the Cambodian peasants as seen by imperial interpreters can be supplemented by the studies cited in notes 2, 18; also Malcolm Caldwell and Lek Hor Tan, *Cambodia*, Monthly Review Press, 1973, and sources cited there, particularly Milton E. Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia*, Cornell, 1969. Ponchaud, in contrast, writes that "to any Western visitor Cambodia was a land of smiles" (the standard cliché; see Meyer, *op. cit.*): "*There did not seem to be any major social or agrarian problems*" and "*French colonization brought order and peace*" though there were injustices that could be "exploited" by "an intelligent propaganda campaign," *Cambodia: Year Zero*, pp. 140f.)

[203](#). Ponchaud writes: "During the reign of Sihanouk and then under Lon Nol, methods used by the government forces in dealing with their Khmer Rouge enemies were no less savage than those subsequently employed by Democratic Kampuchea: between 1968 and 1970 prisoners from Samlaut or Dambar, the cradles of the Khmer revolution, were bound to trees with their stomachs cut open and left to die; others, hurled off the cliffs of Bokor, agonized for days: enemy villages were razed and the villagers clubbed to death by local peasants who had been set against them." *Ibid.*, 140. This account is corroborated from other sources. The events elicited no reaction in the West, and are now generally dismissed or ignored (by Ponchaud as well as others) as a possible reason for subsequent savagery.

[204](#). See the references of notes 2, 45, 202. For a review of press reports, see Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, chapter 3.

[205](#). Recall Elizabeth Becker's puzzlement over the lack of any "philosophical basis" for the policies of autarky, self-reliance, egalitarianism and decentralization. On these matters, see Laura Summers, "Democratic Kampuchea," in Bogdan Szajkowski, *Marxist Governments: A World Survey*, Macmillan, London, forthcoming. Also her introduction to her translation of Khieu Samphan, *Cambodia's Economy and Industrial Development*, Cornell 1979, and the text itself, written in Paris in 1959 for a *Doctorat in economics*. See also Malcolm Caldwell, "Cambodia—Rationale for a Rural Policy," a five-part study presented at the Seminar "Underdevelopment and Subsistence Reproduction in Southeast Asia," University of Bielefeld, 21-23 April 1978. This is a

preliminary draft, never completed, which we hope will be published with Caldwell's papers. See also the report on Thailand cited by Michael Vickery, p. 253, below. Also Denzil Peiris, "The student principles," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 June 1978, explaining how the "economic restructuring" of Cambodia had been following Khieu Samphan's ideas in his thesis, and also outlining these ideas.

[206](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, pp. 75-82, 112-21, and elsewhere.

[207](#). On this matter, Ponchaud writes: "The economy inherited by Democratic Kampuchea had been totally devastated by the war." The South Vietnamese "unhesitatingly demolished a large part of the economic infrastructure of the Cambodian territory," and the United States bombed the rubber plantations, while the soldiers of the Lon Nol regime, "following their instructors' example, buried their own country under their bombs and shells" and the Khmer Rouge "razed everything in their path that could in any way be connected with the West." *ibid.*, p. 85.

[208](#). See notes 202, 207, above. Ponchaud's reference to "their instructors' example" is more accurate.

[209](#). Michael Vickery, "Looking Back at Cambodia," *Westerly*, December 1976. Citations below are from the original manuscript, dated 10 August 1976.

[210](#). Vickery's observation on the contradictory character of refugee stories reflects his personal experience in refugee camps; see above, p. 168. The contradictory character will naturally not emerge from accounts by reporters who proceed in the manner we have described. Note that when Vickery wrote in August 1976, refugee stories were, as he says, "the only first-hand source of news," though the situation was gradually to change, as we have seen. It should also be noted that the "blackout on information" followed years of censorship under the Lon Nol government.

[211](#). "Anti-French maquis cum bandits, who controlled much of the countryside and in some cases probably had contact with the Viet Minh."

The exact history and character of the Cambodian revolutionary movement and its antecedents is the subject of controversy that we will not attempt to review. Laura Summers informs us (personal communication) that the Issarak movement was supported by the Thai resistance opposing the Japanese in World War II (the allies refused assistance, fearing their reformist social programs). Based in the Thai-occupied provinces of the northwest, it was officially recognized by the Thai resistance government in 1944 and received support from both Siamese and Vietnamese. "Prior to

joining the Independence movement most Khmer Issarak were peasants, monks or intellectuals (teachers).” Summers further comments that Lon Nol had been involved in Battambang politics in earlier years, having been appointed to reestablish the local Khmer administration in the region in 1946 and serving as Provincial Governor of Battambang from 1947 to 1949. As for the scale of the military activity of the 1953-54 period, Summers informs us that there were 10,000 armed guerrillas operating in Cambodia in January 1953, 8,000 of them Issaraks divided into several tendencies, less than 2,000 Viet Minh.

[212](#). On political violence perpetrated by the Sihanouk regime, see Heder’s forthcoming article in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (cited in the preface, note 19) where he describes, for example, a speech by Sihanouk in August 1968 “in which he claimed to have put to death over 1,500 communists since 1967 and stated that, if necessary, he would persist in such a policy of merciless extermination until the [Communist Party] submitted” (we quote from the manuscript). This statement, and others like it, aroused no more outcry in the West than the violent repression carried out by the regime.

[213](#). The reference, clearly, is to the leadership in Phnom Penh and their supporters, not to the peasants driven into the city by the war. T.D. Allman had described Phnom Penh as a city “shared by two separate nations: the poor, the refugees, the ordinary people, their lives torn and complicated by the war beyond imagination; and the political elite for whom the war has meant promotions and a revived sense of their own importance ...” (“Forever Khmer,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 September 1971).

[214](#). Timothy Carney notes that “sometime in 1973 the party apparently decided to accelerate its program to alter Khmer society...,” for no cited reason. Carney, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 21. The most interesting material in this collection is a translation of Ith Sarin, “Nine months with the maquis,” excerpted from a 1973 book written in an effort to rally opposition to the Khmer Rouge. It gives some insight, from a very hostile source, into the success of the Khmer Rouge in gaining popular support by conscientiously following the maxims of “serve the people,” “study from the people in order to be like the people,” etc. We have been informed that the sections of Ith Sarin’s book that do not appear in Carney’s excerpts give a rather favorable description of Communist social and economic programs and that the book was banned by the Lon Nol government as being more harmful than beneficial to its cause.

[215](#). Kissinger succeeded in duping the compliant media into believing that he was simply seeking a “decent interval” after the U.S. departure from Vietnam, but some attention to

his actual statements as well as to the unfolding events reveals quite clearly that the aim was military victory in defiance of the Paris Agreements of January 1973, as was pointed out at once, though generally ignored by the press. See the references of chapter 1, note 1.

[216](#). A secondary goal was no doubt to eliminate a rear base for the resistance in Vietnam. According to Snepp, intelligence gathered in 1970 revealed that nearly 80% of the supplies for Communist forces in the southern half of South Vietnam were sent through Cambodia. *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

[217](#). See chapter 1, section 2.

[218](#). Laura Summers, “Cambodia: Model of the Nixon doctrine,” *Current History*, December 1973. For more information on the Nixon-Kissinger rejection of a possible settlement in Cambodia at the time of the Paris agreements of January 1973 and thereafter, see Laura Summers and D. Gareth Porter, “Cambodia: Was there an Understanding?,” submitted to supplement testimony at the Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, on S. 1443, ninety-third Congress, first session, 1973, pp. 457-63.

[219](#). *May Hearings*, p. 14. See the citations on pp. 176-77, above.

[220](#). Laura Summers, “Consolidating the Cambodian Revolution,” *Current History*, December 1975.

[221](#). See note 60 of this chapter.

[222](#). Personal communication.

[223](#). See p. 16, above.

[224](#). *Wall Street Journal*, editorials, 31 August 1978, 16 April 1976.

[225](#). On this matter, Vickery writes (personal communication): “I am convinced, however, that a good bit of Cambodian policy since the end of the war has been inspired by good old-fashioned vengeance and that the revolution could have been carried out more gently. This possibly gratuitous violence would have no connection with a ‘Communist,’ or ‘Marxist,’ or ‘Maoist’ orientation of the new leaders, but, I believe, would be well within the limits of traditional Cambodian personality and culture as I came to understand them during a residence of five years there.” Cf. Meyer, *op. cit.*, (see note 2) for an analysis of Cambodia that lends support to this interpretation, which, however, is unhelpful for the needs of current propaganda.

[226](#). We quote from the transcript, for which we are indebted to Torben Retbøll, who is preparing a study of the Hearings. We have changed only spelling, punctuation and some obvious misprints and grammatical errors.

On Meyer's own reaction to the hearings, see *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), 23 April 1978 (translated in FBIS, 27 April 1978, Cambodia, H2), where he is quoted as saying: "I know I have been lured into a trap here in Oslo. It has been a question of judging and condemning the new Cambodia and not of trying to understand what has happened there." Of the various participants, Meyer was undoubtedly the one most familiar with Cambodian history, society and culture, in fact the only one to have written on Cambodia apart from the war and postwar period, to our knowledge.

[227](#). See note 2. In a review of Meyer's book in the *Journal of the Siam Society* (January 1973, volume 61, Part I, pp. 310-25), Laura Summers describes him as "one of Sihanouk's closest associates" and "without doubt the most prominent of [Sihanouk's large contingent of French advisors] because of his enormous influence in all areas of foreign and domestic policy making and notably in domestic economic planning...By 1961, it was widely acknowledged that he was almost as powerful as Sihanouk." Summers raises serious questions about Meyer's interpretation of the Khmer peasantry and in particular "his psychologizing of essentially social phenomena [which] prevents him from fully understanding the emergence of leftist movements ..." She notes particularly his avoidance of "any implication of French colonialism" and the "colonial bias" of his account, and his implicit rejection of the possibility that the Khmer peasants might have been capable of making rational decisions for themselves on the basis of their perception of social reality. We need hardly add that it is not because of these characteristics of his writing that Meyer's book and the statement to which we turn have been ignored in the United States. In fact, like Sihanouk himself, Meyer was regarded as a dangerous radical by U.S. officials, we have been informed.

[228](#). Context suggests that he has in mind the Vietnamese. He writes: "However, it must not be so that the accusations against the regime in Cambodia—even if they to a certain extent are justified—become the pretext of a Vietnamese intervention for a pretended liberation of the Khmer people." On this warning and the failure to heed it, see the preface to this volume.

[229](#). Compare Ambassador Bjork's reactions, cited above, p. 215.

[230](#). "Human Rights in Cambodia," see note 18.

[231](#). About this event, Ponchaud writes only that “until recently the general tone of relations between Khmers and French was one of mutual friendship. With one exception: the measures adopted by Charles Thomson in 1884, during the Jules Ferry government, which made the Khmers very angry. The effect of the measures was to deprive the sovereign of all but symbolic power, and this led to a full-scale rebellion.” That seems a little thin for the massacre of 20% of the population. *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 145.

[232](#). Elsewhere, she points out that yields were considerably lower than those of Cambodia’s Southeast Asian neighbors before the war. “Consolidating the Cambodian Revolution.”

See also Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-china* (Macmillan, 1942). She comments on the misery of the Khmers despite the country’s potential and actual wealth, the decimation of the population by foreign and internal strife, the indebtedness and lack of credit facilities other than usury for the small proprietors, and the fact that “the population is ever on the edge of starvation” (pp. 338ff.). See also Ben Kiernan, “Peasant life and society in Kampuchea before 1970,” mimeographed, Monash University (Australia), 1978. He reports that the official termination of slavery in 1897 had little impact in some districts and that even for peasants who were free, the majority throughout the period were at a subsistence level, with low yields, frequent hunger and even starvation, and a sharp decline in landholdings for about 80% of farmers from 1930 to 1950. In short, hardly a picture of “order and peace” in a land without “any major social or agrarian problems” (Ponchaud) for the “fun-loving, easy-going Cambodians” (Donald Wise), or a land that had never known hunger until it fell into the hands of the evil Communists (Henry Kamm), a “gentle land” of “happy smiles” as depicted by many Western journalists and casual visitors.

[233](#). Ben Kiernan, “The Samlaut Rebellion and its Aftermath, 1967-70: the Origins of Cambodia’s Liberation Movement,” *Working Papers of the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies*, Monash University, Melbourne, nos. 4 and 5 (undated; apparently 1976).

[234](#). Ben Kiernan, “The 1970 Peasant Uprisings in Kampuchea,” unpublished ms., 1978. Ponchaud writes that “with the support of the Khmer revolutionaries, [the Vietcong and North Vietnamese] incited the frontier peasants to march on Phnom Penh and overthrow the Lon Nol regime” (*op. cit.*, p. 166).

[235](#). “Cambodia in the News: 1975-76,” *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, volume 8, 1975-76; “Social Cohesion in Revolutionary Cambodia,” *Australian Outlook*, December,

1976.

- [236](#). Note that this exposure of the fakery was long before the international publicity afforded these fabrications, which still continues unaffected by fact, as we have seen.
- [237](#). Barron and Paul visited refugee camps in October and November, and also interviewed refugees elsewhere. See above, p. 162, on their mode of access to refugees. Ponchaud's interviews with refugees were also from the same period. Ponchaud based his book, he writes, on written accounts by 94 Khmer refugees, 77 in Thailand and 17 in Vietnam, and interviews with hundreds of illiterate refugees, mostly from the "laboring classes." He identifies only the 94 literate refugees: all middle or upper class with the possible exception of "seven ordinary soldiers," "four Khmer Rouge," "three bonzes," "two fishermen," "a provincial guard," "a truck driver," "a warehouseman." *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. x.
- [238](#). He notes that Western and Thai journalists in Bangkok as well as U.S. officials in the refugee camps concur with this analysis.
- [239](#). Sophi's account; see above, p. 243.
- [240](#). Ponchaud writes that in some areas agricultural work was dangerous after the war "because of the unexploded bombs and shells lurking in the grass or brush." In one region northwest of Phnom Penh, "a day never went by without several villagers being injured or killed by explosions." *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 56. These deaths and injuries, like those from starvation, disease, and overwork caused by the killing of draught animals, are included among "Khmer Rouge atrocities" in the fanciful tabulations offered by the Western media. When he was evacuated from Phnom Penh in May, 1975, Ponchaud passed through villages where he saw "vestiges of the dreadful American air warfare." In conversation, villagers referred to T-28 bombing (including napalm) as the most terrible part of the war, worse than the B-52s. He also passed "a huge cemetery where thousands of revolutionary fighters were buried," a testimony to the nature of the war. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. Such observations rarely found their way to commentary on the book.
- [241](#). Recall that Ponchaud's book is known primarily through second- or third-hand accounts. Much of Kiernan's article in *Australian Outlook* is based on interviews with refugees in Bangkok and camps in Thailand from December 1975 to February 1976. As noted above, there were 10,200 Cambodian refugees in Thailand in August 1976; the January 1976 figure was about 9,300 (Kiernan, personal communication).

[242](#). There is unlikely to be a serious and comprehensive study of refugees, in part because of Thai refusal to permit serious scholars to conduct research among refugees (see p. 168, above), in part because of the changed situation after the Vietnamese invasion.

We hope that further comment is unnecessary on the significance of Kiernan's analysis for investigation of the workings of the Western propaganda system with regard to Cambodia. Later events and discoveries, whatever they may be, quite plainly—as a simple point of logic—have no bearing on an evaluation of what the media have been churning out on the basis of research in 1976.

Subsequent analysis of the later period, should it be undertaken, would have to consider the impact of a two-front war that was particularly violent on the Vietnamese side in 1977 and involved continued attacks by the CIA-trained Khmer Serei on the Thai side (cf. R.-P. Paringaux, *Le Monde*, 28-29 August 1977). For a skeptical view about events on the Thai border, see Norman Peagam, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 February 1977; for an eyewitness account of Cambodian atrocities on the Vietnamese side of the border see Nayan Chanda, *FEER*, 31 March 1978, and for a prescient analysis of “the seriousness of Cambodia's predicament” in a highly unequal battle see Chanda, *FEER*, 11 August 1978. The border conflicts undoubtedly had a severe impact within Cambodia. It is quite senseless to exclude them from consideration in interpreting internal events in Cambodia in the postwar period, as is not uncommon. See Heder's papers cited earlier for extensive discussion.

[243](#). Nayan Chanda, “When the killing has to stop,” *FEER*, 29 October 1976; “Cambodge: Après deux ans d'isolement complet, Premiers signes d'une timide ouverture au monde extérieur,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 1977. See also the *FEER Asia Yearbook*, 1977.

[244](#). Note that his estimate is at the lower end of Twining's estimated “thousands or hundreds of thousands. Recall also the estimates by Carney and Holbrooke cited above as well as those by Cambodia watchers cited by Simons (p. 182).

[245](#). Here there is a footnote reference to a communication by W.J. Sampson to which we return.

[246](#). See note 80, this chapter.

[247](#). *FEER*. Whether Chanda is correct in attributing the use of force to uneducated peasants, we are not qualified to say. We should remark, however, that modern history

offers little basis for the belief that uneducated peasants are more given to savagery, violence or terror than sophisticated Western intellectuals. Quite the contrary. Similarly, we wonder whether there is any source of peasant origin that offers justification for massacre and annihilation in the manner, say, of Guenter Lewy's highly praised *America in Vietnam*, on which we have commented several times. For further discussion, see our review of this book in *Inquiry*, 19 March 1979.

[248](#). See notes 82 and 293, this chapter.

[249](#). For more on these matters see the ignored study by Hildebrand and Porter, cited in note 9, this chapter.

[250](#). For more on these matters, briefly noted in the revised English translation of Ponchaud's book, see also *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 1976, 7 October 1977, and 2 June 1977; and the articles by Summers in *Current History* cited above, notes 63, 220.

[251](#). W.J. Sampson, letter, London *Economist*, 26 March 1977; reprinted in *May Hearings*, as an Appendix.

[252](#). Recall Barron's attempt to defend his 5 million figure; note 117, above. In an unpublished paper, Sampson arrives at an estimate of about 8.4 million for the population at the end of 1978, noting many uncertainties. The *FEER Asia 1979 Yearbook* estimates the population at 8.2 million.

[253](#). This figure presumably includes wartime deaths.

[254](#). See his review of Ponchaud and the "corrections," where the charge is withdrawn. See notes 17, 48.

[255](#). See note 348, below.

[256](#). *May Hearings*, p. 37.

[257](#). William Shawcross, "Third Indochina War," *New York Review of Books*, 6 April 1978.

[258](#). Note that this communication is subsequent to Shawcross's phone call.

[259](#). "An Exchange on Cambodia," *New York Review of Books*, 20 July 1978.

[260](#). George C. Hildebrand, "Kampuchean refugee challenges terror stories circulated in U.S.A.," *News from Kampuchea*, June 1977; also *Guardian (New York)*, 30 March 1977. In the same report, Hildebrand states that he "spoke personally with Cambodians

who were approached by U.S. agents seeking to recruit them into...armed bands [that “raided Cambodia from bases in neighboring Thailand”] during 1975.”

[261](#). Cf. the eyewitness account by Sydney H. Schanberg (*New York Times*, 9 May 1975): the Khmer Rouge were “peasant boys, pure and simple—darker skinned than their city brethren, with gold in their front teeth. To them the city is a curiosity, an oddity, a carnival, where you visit but do not live...When they looted jewelry shops, they kept only one watch for themselves and gave the rest to their colleagues or passersby.” On the peasant army, see also the comments by Peang Sophi and by Jean-Jacques Cazaux, cited below, p. 331-32. On how apparent efforts to prevent looting have been transmuted by the international press into looting, savage repression, brutality and revenge, see note 101, above.

[262](#). Chou Meng Tarr, “Our experiences during the liberation of Phnom Penh, April 1975, Part I,” *News from Kampuchea*, volume 1, no. 1, April 1977; Chou Meng Tarr and Shane Tarr, “Part II,” *ibid.*, volume 1, no. 2, June 1977.

[263](#). Methods aside, most observers believe it to have been a necessity. See, e.g., the comments by Poole (p. 176) and many others. See also notes 273, 313, and p. 191.

[264](#). Their observations are corroborated by other sources; see Hildebrand and Porter, *op. cit.*, pp. 50f. See also the eyewitness report of the situation in the hospitals at the time of the Khmer Rouge takeover by Jon Swain, *Sunday Times (London)*, 11 May 1975: “Hundreds of people were being subjected to a hideous death” at a hospital where doctors “had not reported for work for two days, and there was no one to treat the two thousand wounded.” People were bleeding to death in the corridors or in wards caked with blood and thick with flies. A nurse explained that the doctors simply stayed away, while “the dead and dying lay in pools of their own blood,” including a Khmer Rouge “who had somehow been brought there for treatment.” In dismay, Swain and his journalist colleagues “sloshed our way through the blood to the exit.” Reports by Swain and others indicate that the subsequent Khmer Rouge evacuation of the hospitals was a brutal affair, but perhaps the scene they observed is relevant to understanding the evacuation policy.

Swain’s lengthy and horrifying account contrasts with the brief mention by his companion, Sydney Schanberg of the *New York Times*, who describes the evacuation vividly and notes that many of the miserable patients forcefully evacuated will have little chance of survival, but of the situation in Phnom Penh he says only that “many of the wounded were dying for lack of care” (*New York Times*, 9 May 1975; in an

accompanying dispatch headed “American’s Brief Brush With Arrest and Death,” he writes: “Doctors and surgeons, out of fear, had failed to come to work and the wounded were bleeding to death in the corridors”). He believes that the Khmer Rouge who threatened him and his companions as they left the hospital may have been angry because “they wanted no foreign witnesses” to the evacuation, though a reading of Swain’s account of the same visit raises questions about the alternatives.

265. Richard Boyle, *Flower of the Dragon*, Ramparts Press, 1972. Boyle filed a story on the exodus from Phnom Penh for Pacific News Service (30 June 1975). In it he reports having seen the Calmette hospital “now administered by the Khmer Rouge,” “relay station and rest stops along the road out of Phnom Phenh, where Khmer Rouge troops—mostly women—and Buddhist monks supplied refugees with food and water” and “an orderly exodus, in which refugees moved at a leisurely pace on bicycles, ox-carts and on foot.” He states that “not one of the 1100 foreign nationals, including about 20 journalists, who left on the two convoys provided by the Khmer Rouge ever witnessed any bodies abandoned on the roadside,” contradicting a White House intelligence memo cited by Jack Anderson, *Washington Post*, 23 June 1975. He believes the evacuation to have been justified by horrendous conditions in Phnom Penh, which he describes: squalid refugee camps, severe malnutrition and disease, patients in hospitals dying from gangrene and suffering from lack of treatment unless they were wealthy, lack of doctors (who fled), destruction of water filtration plants and power lines by “secret police agents” (“By the evening of 17 April, there was no power in many parts of the city, and the water supply was running out”), “a dwindling food supply.” French medical doctors at Calmette, the only functioning hospital, told him that they “feared an epidemic of bubonic plague, or even worse, cholera or typhoid.” He claims further that the Khmer doctors who remained treated patients “too sick to make the journey into the countryside” and that the evacuation was “systematic and well-planned” so far as he could see. He questions the charge in *Newsweek* by its photographer Dennis Cameron that the Khmer Rouge mistreated civilians, noting that “the magazine failed to produce a single photo from Cameron to substantiate his charge.” Boyle’s account did not appear in the national media, or elsewhere in the press, to our knowledge. Other reports from European journalists giving a similar account of the evacuation are cited by Retbøll (“Kampuchea and ‘the *Reader’s Digest*’”), who notes that given the resources of the *Reader’s Digest*, their omission of evidence inconsistent with the Barron-Paul report “is not a matter of inadvertence but rather a conscious attempt to suppress evidence which might disprove or modify their own conclusions.” Retbøll

also cites a statement by Lim Pech Kuon, one of the witnesses at the Oslo Hearings, who challenged Anthony Paul from the floor, saying “it is obvious that Paul does not know anything at all about Cambodia. Therefore it is not up to him to judge this country.”

[266.](#) *Guardian* (New York) (28 May 1975). Barron and Paul report the story that Boyle asserts was censored by AP, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[267.](#) Reporters quoted Dr. Bernard Piquart, chief surgeon at the Calmette Hospital, as having “seen hundreds of bodies with their throats cut in the central market” and having “affirmed that he had been forced to operate on wounded Communist soldiers at gunpoint and that he had cared for French women who had been raped.” When he crossed the Cambodian border to Thailand with the convoy from the French Embassy, however, Piquart “seemed embarrassed over the wide publicity given to his reports” and “said he had talked too much and had never seen all of that.” AFP, *New York Times* (10 May 1978).

[268.](#) 7 October 1977.

[269.](#) *TLS*, 28 October 1977.

[270.](#) *Ibid.*, 4 November 1974.

[271.](#) *Ibid.*, 25 November 1977.

[272.](#) *Ibid.*, 2 December 1977.

[273.](#) It is not easy to reconcile Leifer’s praise for the Barron-Paul book with his own observations and scholarly work. See, for example, his “Economic Survey” of Cambodia in *The Far East and Australasia*, Europa, 1976, pp. 431f., in which he observes that “the onset of war in Cambodia completely disrupted the economy...By April 1975, there was not a Cambodian economy, only the importation of foodstuffs financed by the United States government.” Thus the “first priority” for the Khmer Rouge “was declared to be the restoration of the national economy. Partly to this end, the urban centres, including the capital, were cleared of their inhabitants who were driven into the rural areas to work on the land and in other tasks of economic reconstruction. The initial rigours of the collectivization of agriculture were sustained at human cost but a good first harvest and the virtual rehabilitation of Cambodia’s small industrial sector, with Chinese technical assistance, placed the economy in a viable condition.” Given these facts, how can one give a favorable review to a book that excises from history all that precedes April 1975 and attributes the Draconian measures

then instituted solely to Communist villainy?

[274.](#) 30 April 1977.

[275.](#) Phil Gailey, “Don’t Withhold Aid from Chile Junta Because of ‘Mistakes,’ Panel Is Told,” *Miami Herald* (6 August 1974). His *TV Guide* article, based largely on Barron-Paul, is entitled “The Cambodian Blood Bath and The Great Silence.” The major theme is the “appalling” refusal of the media to take seriously “the murder of a million innocent people,” to be explained by the tendency of the media to overlook crimes that “are inflicted in the name of revolution.” Dr. Lefever “directs the Ethics and Public Policy Program of the Kennedy Institute of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and teaches international politics there,” *TV Guide* informs us. It should be borne in mind, difficult as it is to imagine, that material of this sort not only inundates a mass audience but is also taken seriously in allegedly “sophisticated” circles in the United States.

[276.](#) Donald Wise, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 September 1977. This is the review already cited, which began with the probably fabricated *Famiglia Cristiana* interview and ended with the “quote” about one million people being enough to build the new Cambodia; each example forms part of the impeccable documentation in the Barron-Paul book. Wise also cites with approval Barron-Paul’s explanation of the more extreme policies as a consequence of Khieu Samphan’s alleged “impotence,” and other deep remarks.

[277.](#) Paul Grimes, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, 31 August 1977. The word “however” refers to the Barron-Paul subtitle, “the untold story of Communist genocide in Cambodia.” The story “hasn’t been untold at all,” Grimes correctly observes, referring to a July 1975 story by Henry Kamm in the *New York Times*, one of the innumerable many since. See also the review in the *New York Times Book Review*, 11 September 1977, by Jean Lacouture, which again makes this point.

[278.](#) *Economist*, 10 September 1977.

[279.](#) For one of many examples, see Editorial, *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 January 1977, reporting the Barron-Paul conclusions with no question as to their authenticity, while deploring the “indifference in America and elsewhere to the fate of freedom under what appears to be one of the most brutal and concentrated onslaughts in history...in the lovely land and among the engaging people of Cambodia.” Like the authors of the book, the editors have conveniently forgotten an earlier onslaught on this

lovely land. Their earlier concern for “the fate of freedom” for Cambodian peasants remains a closely-guarded secret.

[280](#). In the *Nation*, 25 June 1977, we commented on some of the more obvious inadequacies of the book.

[281](#). *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 18 September 1977. Excerpts from the longer *Guardian* article appear in the *Boston Globe* (2 October 1977).

In conformity with the standard line, Woollacott alleges that Cambodian atrocities had previously been disregarded. “The American Right did not want to examine at all closely the kind of fate to which they had abandoned ‘their’ Cambodians. The whole array of Left-wing and liberal groups in the United States, France, and Britain, who had supported the Khmer Rouge cause, after some sophistry about the evacuation of the cities and some suggestions that the stories of executions were CIA ‘plants,’ more or less dropped Cambodia.” He does not refer us to sources for “the whole array of Left-wing and liberal groups” who took this stand, or explain how the regular condemnations of Cambodian genocide from mid-1975 in the mainstream press (*New York Times*, *Time*, etc.) comport with this version of the facts. He also states that “only when a figure as impressive as Jean Lacouture spoke out, as he did earlier this year, did a few Left-wingers timidly follow,” referring to the article by Lacouture that condemned Cambodian “autogenocide” on the basis of gross misrepresentation of Ponchaud. This paragraph was dropped by the *Boston Globe*, who were aware of the facts; see note 348, below. Woollacott also expresses his astonishment that the Cambodian revolutionaries had not “picked up...the essential humaneness of French life and thought,” as exemplified in Indochina for so many years, or in Algeria at the time when they were studying in Paris.

[282](#). *New Statesman*, 23 September 1977. Shawcross is impressed by the consistency of refugee reports, without, however, inquiring into the extent to which this is an artifact based on the selection process, not a small matter, as we have seen, particularly in the case of the book under review.

[283](#). *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (30 July 1978), reprinted from the *Washington Post*.

[284](#). *Op. cit.*, p. viii.

[285](#). This scholarly criticism did not extend to the citations from his own work, as we have seen. Cf. pp. 203ff., above.

[286](#). *Op. cit.* pp. 211-212.

[287](#). *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

[288](#). For example, Jon Swain's comments, cited below. Barron and Paul refer in passing to the "fratricidal war" in which civilians were "caught up in the crossfire between government and insurgent battalions or killed by bombings" (p. 6). Now here is there any indication that the United States had anything to do with the destruction of the countryside. Equally scandalous is the reference to the U.S. "limited incursion" and the "devastating B-52 raids" which they depict, in accordance with government propaganda, as directed against North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries (p. 54). Missing from their "impeccable documentation, to cite only one relevant example, are the eyewitness reports by several U.S. correspondents (e.g., Richard Dudman, then a Khmer Rouge captive) of the impact of the U.S. "incursion" and aerial attack on Cambodian civilians. Nor do they take note of the subsequent destruction caused by the United States, or of course, the earlier U.S. interventions, military and otherwise, in Cambodia. See the references cited in notes 2, 45, 202, 204, for ample detail.

The absurdity of their assumption about the irrelevance of history was noted by William Shawcross (*New York Review of Books*, 4 March 1976), referring to their book then under preparation, evidently, with little effect.

[289](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

[290](#). In striking contrast with their freewheeling estimates about deaths in the postwar period (by definition, at the hands of *Angka*), they are properly skeptical about the figures of wartime casualties, which, they sternly admonish, are offered with no stated basis (p. 6n). To appreciate the humor of this remark, one must read through the "methodology" they offer for counting postwar casualties on pp. 203f. Carney, for what it is worth, takes the figure of one million to be a "close" estimate of wartime "killed or wounded." *July Hearings*, p. 22.

[291](#). Our emphasis. *Op. cit.*, p. 206.

[292](#). To be precise, their numbers are 430,000 or more from disease and starvation in the latter half of 1975 and 250,000 or more in 1976, plus 400,000 or more "during the first exodus," presumably from disease and starvation.

[293](#). See Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 71, citing "American Embassy sources," which, he privately informs us, means the Bangkok Embassy. We write "allegedly produced" because no qualified person at the U.S. Embassy ever produced that figure, so we are informed. Charles Twining, who was the Indochina watcher at the U.S.

embassy in Bangkok from 1975 to 1977, writes that there was never any “Embassy figure” of 1.2 million “or of any other dimension” and that although people in Bangkok naturally tried to arrive at estimates in their own minds as to the number of Cambodians who died from execution, or from disease or malnutrition, “these were purely private, and mostly short-lived, attempts.” Letter, 20 November 1978.

[294](#). See note 82.

[295](#). *Op. cit.*, pp. 6, 28, 208.

[296](#). Perhaps the percentage of the population that voluntarily supported the Communists was as small as the minority that supported the American rebels in 1776-1783; see chapter 2, section 2.

[297](#). *Op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

[298](#). On this matter see note 418, below.

[299](#). That the Communists depicted the North Vietnamese as “our teachers” seems hardly likely, given their constant emphasis on independence and self-reliance and the long history of conflict between Cambodian and Vietnamese Communists. On the development of Cambodian Communist policy during this period, see Heder’s papers cited in the preface, note 19.

[300](#). *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

[301](#). *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[302](#). For a serious account of how the Communist forces were built up from an estimated 5-10,000 in the pre-coup period (January 1968 to March 1970), despite opposition from the Vietnamese and Chinese, who opposed the armed struggle line of the Khmer Communist Party, see Heder, *op. cit.*

[303](#). Even the limited range of sources they cite in their “impeccable documentation” hardly supports their case. Thus under “paucity of popular support for the communists” (p. 214) we find the study edited by Carney, *op. cit.*, which does indeed include the statement by a hostile critic who lived with the Khmer Rouge that the masses do not support them, though it also contains laments from the same source concerning their popularity and success. See note 214 above. Under the same heading they also cite Quinn’s study (see note 60), which gives ample evidence suggesting the contrary conclusion, as we have noted.

[304](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

- [305](#). Recall that the Tarrs report having seen dead bodies on the streets. As many journalists have noted, it was difficult to decide whether dead that were seen were victims of the last stages of the fighting or postwar executions. Barron and Paul are quite certain, however. Their primary source, Ponchaud, saw no dead bodies (*Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 24). See also the report by Lim Pech Kuon cited above, p. 167.
- [306](#). *Op. cit.*, p. 215.
- [307](#). Not surprisingly, reports transmitted under such circumstances have low reliability. For example, Swain also reports that surgeon Bernard Piquart reported several atrocious acts by Khmer Rouge in the Calmette Hospital, a report corroborated by “other witnesses.” But Piquart seems to have had second thoughts. See note 267.
- [308](#). Cf. chapter 2, section 2.
- [309](#). Recall that people who have a considerable knowledge of Cambodia do not find these fellows so “un-Cambodian like”—cf., e.g. Meyer, p. 255, above; Vickery, note 225—though they are undoubtedly quite unlike those whom Meyer calls the “Western colonials” in Phnom Penh.
- [310](#). Compare Barron and Paul, who keep strictly to the government propaganda line: whatever the facts, the U.S. was simply striking “communist sanctuaries” (p. 54), i.e., Vietnamese Communists, as the context makes clear.
- [311](#). This is not the only example. To take another, while they quote Swain’s horrified account of the evacuation of the hospitals, they omit his equally horrified account of what he saw in a hospital before evacuation. See above, note 264.
- [312](#). Cazaux and Juvenal, *Washington Post* (9 May 1975).
- [313](#). This is in response to a surmise by some foreigners that only the strong will survive, so that the forced march is “genocide by natural selection.” Others, they say, “believe the depopulation of the cities was a necessary race against time to prepare the rice fields for a new planting. Food is very short now, and much farmland had been devastated by the war.”
- [314](#). The *Washington Post* (9 May 1975) carries a story filed from Aranyaprathet (not Bangkok) compiled from unidentified news dispatches that contains reports that many refugees saw decomposing bodies or people who had been shot or apparently beaten to death, citing also Olle Tolgraven of Swedish Broadcasting who said “he did not believe

there had been wholesale executions” though the Khmer Rouge may have shot people who refused to leave their homes when ordered to evacuate.

[315](#). *Washington Post* (9 May 1975). Paul takes care of this annoying fact as follows, in a letter to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (9 December 1977): “I’m afraid that the evidence is overwhelming that these people, whoever they were, were either the rare exceptions or were not telling the truth,” appealing to the testimony of “scores of Cambodian refugees” most of whom “witnessed summary executions” and all of whom, to his recollection, saw “corpses during the long exodus”—as did some foreigners, though the more scrupulous among them pointed out that it was impossible to know whether they were victims of the recent bloody fighting or of executions. Ponchaud writes that he saw no dead bodies in or near Phnom Penh (*Op. cit.*, p. 24).

[316](#). *New York Times* (9 May 1975).

[317](#). *Le Monde* (May 8-10). See the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (17 May 1975) and a brief report in the *Washington Post* (8 May 1975), which notes correctly that his account “lent no substance to reports that a massive and bloody purge of anti-Communists is under way in Cambodia.” He saw no bodies en route and found the streets of Phnom Penh empty on leaving the city. His report “was generally favorable to the Khmer Rouge,” and thus not to be discussed further.

[318](#). Recall that the second-hand report of the French teacher which they cite from Swain provides no evidence for the horrible consequences of summary executions that “virtually everybody” saw, but rather serves as an example of the “summary executions” themselves, furthermore, an example that does not support their conclusion, as noted.

[319](#). John Barron, letter, *Economist* (5 November 1977); response to Retbøll’s letter of October 15. Anthony M. Paul, letter, *FEER*, 9 December 1977; response to Retbøll’s letter of October 28.

[320](#). See note 17, above.

[321](#). See note 2, above. Even “scoops” have been avoided by the press when they convey an unwanted picture. For example, in 1972 Serge Thion was invited to visit the liberated zones in Cambodia, reporting on his experiences in *Le Monde* (26, 27, 28 April 1972). His reports provided a unique insight into the character of an unknown, though evidently very successful and significant movement. His story was offered to the *Washington Post*, but rejected. It appeared nowhere in the U.S. media, to our

knowledge. For some excerpts, see *For Reasons of State*, pp. 190ff.

[322](#). Several are cited in Hildebrand and Porter, in their ignored study.

[323](#). See, for example, the testimony of Peter Poole, *May Hearings*, pp. 18-19. He points out that “I don’t think there is a great deal we can do” to improve the situation though we might easily worsen it, and that even speaking out will do little good in this case. The point was commonly emphasized by people who know and care about Cambodia, as was the fact that the kind of irresponsible and sometimes hysterical “speaking out” that was being done, with its falsifications and unsupported allegations, could cause serious harm. See note 228 of this chapter, and the preface to this volume.

[324](#). Far easier, in fact. Throughout the protest against the U.S. war in Indochina, the Soviet Union was quite reluctant to back or tolerate strong condemnations of the United States, specifically of Nixon, a fact that led to continual controversy at international meetings.

[325](#). Not really “perfectly” because of the condemnation of the United States and the major theme that Khmer Rouge policies have roots and reason in the domestic society. But few will actually read the book, discovering these elements, and the commentary that reaches a mass audience can be counted on, by and large, to keep to atrocity stories. Lacouture takes note of the Western responsibility but ignores the second major theme of the book, as do other reviewers.

[326](#). Author’s note for the American translation, p. xiii.

[327](#). William Shawcross, review of *Cambodia: Year Zero*, *Inquiry*, 16 October 1978.

[328](#). *Economist*, 1 July 1978.

[329](#). The *Economist* is correct, though not for the reasons it probably had in mind, in describing Lacouture’s published corrections as “a bizarre episode.” In what passes for intellectual discourse in the West, political discussion included, correction of errors is rare indeed, as a glance at review journals will indicate. Lacouture deserves credit for departing from the general norm. We think that his corrections are inadequate and disagree with some of the conclusions expressed in them, but we want to stress that it is no crime to misread—it is a rare review that avoids error—and it is only proper to issue corrections when errors are discovered. One of us (Chomsky) played a role in this, which though entirely a matter of private correspondence has for some reason been the subject of considerable discussion (and distortion) in the press. We see no point in commenting on any of this.

[330](#). The *Economist* thinks otherwise, for interesting reasons to which we return directly.

[331](#). See, e.g., Leo Cherne's comment on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, referring to Ponchaud as "very sympathetic to the Khmer Rouge." See note 53. Similarly, the review in *Foreign Affairs* stresses that Ponchaud "was initially sympathetic to the Khmer Rouge" (Winter, 1978-1979), as have many others who take this alleged fact to add to the credibility of his account (reasonably, if it is true). Shawcross also writes that Ponchaud "originally welcomed the prospect of a revolutionary change" (*New York Review*, 6 April 1978). See also note 338.

[332](#). *New York Review*, 31 March 1977; thus he writes that he can read Ponchaud's book "only with shame."

[333](#). *New York Times Book Review*, 11 September 1977.

[334](#). For Sihanouk's own account, see the preface to this volume.

[335](#). See chapter 2, p. 26.

[336](#). See chapter 4, p. 128.

[337](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 22.

[338](#). Reed Irvine of Accuracy in Media, Inc. (See note 33), letter, *Boston Globe* (15 October 1978).

[339](#). Lacouture's original charges, in fact, have continued to circulate widely even after they were withdrawn. To cite only one case, Homer Jack, Secretary-General of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, produced a *WCRP Report* entitled "Can the United Nations stop human massacre in Democratic Kampuchea" (20 November 1978) which is full of fanciful charges, including Jean Lacouture's estimate "of the number of persons killed" as "one-quarter of the population," referring to Lacouture's *New York Review* article in which he stated that the regime "boasted" of this achievement, but not to his "Corrections" where he stated that the charge had no basis. It is striking that the credible evidence of substantial atrocities never seems to suffice for human rights activists of this type. Jack surely knew of Lacouture's corrections; indeed, in the course of a series of undocumented slanders directed at "the political right wing" and "the left wing," he denounced our review in which the facts were mentioned. Even when the falsehood was specifically called to his attention, among many others in the document, he felt no need to correct it (or others). Recall Orwell's statement on what is true "in the sight of God" in the Stalinist school of falsification; p. 196, above. The example is not

untypical.

[340](#). Editorial, “‘Cambodia in the Year Zero,’” 26 April 1977.

[341](#). In contrast, its foreign correspondents have often been outstanding.

[342](#). For a few examples of its countenancing certain acts of barbarism and remaining silent about others, see Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, pp. 14f., 185, 244, 277.

[343](#). See note 279.

[344](#). 21 March 1977.

[345](#). *New York Times* (21 April 1975). The preceding sentence tells us that “the early American decisions on Indochina can be regarded as blundering efforts to do good. But by 1969...” See p. 17, above. More recently Lewis has warned that “America should do nothing” regarding Rhodesia, because, “if we remember Vietnam, we know that intervention, however well-intended, may do terrible harm if it is uninformed.” (*New York Times*, 1 February 1979). The inability of the intelligentsia to inform themselves about what their government is up to truly defies comment.

[346](#). Chomsky, letter, 1 June 1977.

[347](#). 12 May 1977.

[348](#). We know of only one case of honest retraction: Matthew Storin, *Boston Globe* (13 May 1977), correcting a report of 7 April based on Lacouture. Storin was also unique in his willingness to at least mention contrary evidence that was privately provided to journalists who had relied on Lacouture, along with conclusive evidence that their references were without basis. Alexander Cockburn expressed the hope—in vain—that “such liberal journalists as Lewis” who had relied on Lacouture’s derivative account would see “that ‘details’ do indeed matter” (*Village Voice*, 16 May 1977). After Lacouture’s corrections appeared, a letter was sent to the *New York Review* by a well-known scientist (Nobel Laureate) commenting that in his field, when conclusions are published based on certain evidence and it then turns out that the cited evidence is incorrect, the scientist does not retract the evidence while reiterating the conclusions—but evidently matters are different in journalism. The letter was not published.

[349](#). As we have mentioned (note 48), in the *Nouvel Observateur*, where Lacouture’s review was originally published, the corrections never appeared. But this fact, which we find rather surprising, is perhaps of little moment given that in the United States,

where they did appear, they have been ignored and what remains in the media record are the original errors. A misstated reference by Lacouture to a quote that has been deleted from the American edition appears on the cover of the British edition of Ponchaud's book. A different quote from Lacouture's review appears on the cover of the American edition, with no concern over the fact that the conclusions expressed were based on no accurate citation. See note 339.

[350](#). Somewhat misleadingly. He writes that "My reference to the death of 'one quarter' of the population in a single year must be corrected"—he had spoken of "boasts" and killing—citing Ponchaud's text, which gives a Cambodian estimate of 800,000 dead during the war and a U.S. embassy (Bangkok) estimate of 1.2 million dead (not killed) since the war; adding the two, we obtain the two million figure, about one quarter of the population, that has since been used with abandon in the press and Congress, very likely with this source. See note 293, above, on Ponchaud's 1.2 million estimate allegedly based on "American embassy sources," though the embassy offered no such estimate. Thus Lacouture's statement that the Khmer Rouge boast of having eliminated some 2 million people is based on a misreading of a claim by Ponchaud that is dubious to begin with. Ponchaud mentions other estimates attributed to various vaguely-identified sources, but there is little reason to suppose that these claims have any more validity than the single one which is subject to check, and which, as is the way with verifiable claims, turns out to be inaccurate. Lacouture continues to refer to the 2 million figure (dropping the "boast"); "...the hundreds of thousands, indeed 2 million victims ..." of the Pol Pot Regime (*Nouvel Observateur*, 2 October 1978), an excerpt from his book *Survive le peuple cambodgien!* He gives no source, and does not explain how such charges will help the Cambodian people to survive.

[351](#). See pp. 72-73 of the French original, pp. 50-51 of the American translation.

[352](#). We do not know why Ponchaud dropped the quotes in the translation in this case. Perhaps because of the focus on the question after Lacouture's review and corrections. Or perhaps the reason lies in a debate over translation from Khmer on which we are not competent to comment. In *News from Kampuchea*, August 1977, Stephen Heder challenged several of Ponchaud's translations, including this one. He asserts that in this case, the correct translation of the Khmer phrase (which he says is openly used) is something like "to have no more of this kind of person (e.g., imperialists, oppressors)." In a privately circulated document ("Vicissitudes de la linguistique au service de l'Idéologie abstraite," Ponchaud rejects these challenges to his translations. In this case

he states that Heder's proposed translation is "false," but also says that his own translation was "hasty," and would require more time to justify and polish. His own account of the meaning seems to us to leave the correct interpretation rather ambiguous over a certain range, with his specific formulation at the harsher extreme. In any event, even if there is a quote, contrary to what the American edition suggests, it would seem that Lacouture's conclusions from a possible rhetorical flourish are distinctly questionable.

[353](#). The quote as Lacouture gives it in his *Nouvel Observateur* review is *inaccurate*, and further errors are introduced in the English translation. We will drop this matter, keeping to Ponchaud's text.

[354](#). P. 73 of the French original.

[355](#). This translation, which is sufficiently accurate, is what appears in the British edition, p. 70.

[356](#). Heder provided us with an English translation; Ponchaud with a French translation and the Thai original.

[357](#). Our apologies to the editors of *Prachachat* for the comparison.

[358](#). *News from Kampuchea*, August 1977.

[359](#). Cf. note 273, above. Also, note 82.

[360](#). There is a problem in that the French translation given in Ponchaud's book differs from the French translation that he sent us, which includes the context omitted in the book. We will assume that the translation that he sent us is accurate. It corresponds closely to the English translation provided by Heder. We have not taken the trouble to verify the translations from the Thai original, since the main points emerge fairly clearly even without this further step.

[361](#). The phrase reads: "il peut même arriver qu'on n'y arrive pas partout, et les autorités se trouvent alors chargées d'un fardeau très lourd."

[362](#). American edition, p. 51, a fair translation of the French text in Ponchaud's book.

[363](#). This exercise in verification raises some further questions. It is striking that those passages in the original French text that drew attention because of Lacouture's review have been softened, deleted, or changed in the American translation, or where they remain, are extremely misleading or outright misrepresentations. Note that this is true of each of the four cases just discussed, including the first, where a look at Ponchaud's

text shows that estimates of roughly a million dead (the most crucial of which lacks any credible source) become, a few lines later, allegations that many millions are being eliminated, most of the population in fact. These passages were selected for investigation at random, in effect; that is, they were not selected on any basis other than the fact that they seemed to be the passages that Lacouture had in mind in his misrepresentations of (i.e., references to) the book. The facts suggest some obvious questions about the remainder. We have not carried out a thorough line-by-line comparison but a fairly careful reading has not brought to light any other changes from the French original to the American translation (apart from some new material and some rearrangement). If this impression is correct, it also suggests obvious questions.

Ponchaud's book is almost completely lacking in verifiable documentation. The *Prachachat* reference is one of a handful of examples. It is therefore of more than passing interest to see how it fares upon examination.

[364](#). For a review, see Chomsky, *For Reasons of State*, chapter 2, where there are references for the citations here.

[365](#). Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, Dell, 1967, pp. 436f.

[366](#). *New York Times* (20 March 1964).

[367](#). See chapter 1.

[368](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 164.

[369](#). *Ibid.*

[370](#). See below, p. 288. It has been alleged that Sihanouk was being hypocritical in his denunciation of the U.S. bombing and that he had in fact secretly authorized it. This has been occasionally argued in defense of the failure of the U.S. media, like Ponchaud, to make public Sihanouk's impassioned criticism of the bombing of the civilian society of Cambodia. Two points deserve notice. First, even if Sihanouk secretly authorized bombing of "Vietcong bases," he surely did not authorize bombing of Khmer peasants, and his protests were directed against the latter crime. Second, while commentators and media analysts may draw whatever conclusions they please from the conflicting evidence available, this does not entitle them to suppress what is, by any standards, crucial evidence, in this case, Sihanouk's attempt to arouse international protest over the U.S. bombing of the civilian society.

[371](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, pp. 165, 169.

[372](#). *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[373](#). *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[374](#). *Ibid.*

[375](#). *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[376](#). See notes 146, 147 above.

[377](#). *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[378](#). See above, p. 183.

[379](#). See pp. 175 and 191 above.

[380](#). *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[381](#). *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[382](#). See Peang Sophi's testimony, p. 243 above. See also several reports cited by Kiernan, "Social Cohesion," from the *Bangkok Post*, reporting the statements of refugees that an order to stop reprisals was announced at the end of May 1975.

[383](#). See note 237, above, for a review of their scope and character.

[384](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, pp. 16, 53. Ponchaud does not explicitly state that this is the same man, but it appears so from his description.

[385](#). *Le Monde* (17 February 1976).

[386](#). Sometimes in more detail, as we have noted in the case of the alleged "quote" about 1-2 million young Khmers being sufficient to build the new Cambodia.

[387](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. 125.

[388](#). *Ibid.*, p. 162. See also notes 203 and 240, above.

[389](#). *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

[390](#). But given Ponchaud's carelessness with fact, already noted in several cases, some caution is in order here as well. Thus, the author's note to the American translation, dated 20 September 1977, contains a reference to a letter dated 19 October 1977.

[391](#). See note 352, above.

[392](#). We omit reference to other slight discrepancies.

[393](#). We have kept to published material, omitting discussion of personal correspondence

mentioned by Ponchaud, who presumably obtained it from the editor of the *New York Review*. His references to this personal correspondence, apart from being irrelevant, are incorrect. What he calls “a polemical exchange” leading to Lacouture’s corrections consists of personal letters pointing out errors and urging correction; Lacouture’s published corrections reveal how little it was “polemical.” It is difficult to imagine a less polemical response to the discovery of serious errors, and it was so understood, as the correspondence clearly shows. Nor is there anything in this correspondence to support Ponchaud’s false statements, though even if there were, it would be irrelevant in this context, as should be obvious. We should perhaps mention that in his book cited above and in articles and interviews elsewhere, Lacouture has been presenting grossly false versions of Chomsky’s views, invariably without the slightest effort at documentation, and indeed, quite inconsistent with what he knows to be true. This too deserves no further comment.

[394](#). See note 329. Ponchaud’s fakery has also found its way into what purports to be “scholarship.” In a review of Ponchaud’s book in *International Affairs*, journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (January 1979), Dennis Duncanson writes that “The author reports, without rancour, that after the French edition came out it was attacked by Professor Noam Chomsky and Mr. Gareth Porter for relying on refugees’ stories, on the grounds that refugees can be assumed to warp the truth, that we ought to give the Phnom Penh Politburo the benefit of its secrecy, and that as a positive fact no massacres took place in Cambodia.” This is an embellishment of Ponchaud’s false statements in the British translation, presented here simply as fact—to this scholar, it is of no concern that Ponchaud’s charges are presented not only “without rancour” but also without a particle of evidence, and that, as can be easily verified, the charges are not only false but indeed were conscious falsehoods, as we have seen. Duncanson proceeds with further falsehoods and undocumented slanders that give some insight into what is regarded as “scholarship” in this domain but are otherwise not worthy of comment.

[395](#). Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1978, p. 210. See note 141, above. We are indebted to Torben Retbøll for providing us with the relevant pages.

[396](#). *Inquiry*, 16 October 1978. See note 327, above, and text.

[397](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. xiv.

[398](#). *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[399](#). Shawcross regards this question as not just serious, but the most crucial question, and he believes that the evidence has firmly established central direction and intent. See note 187, above, and text. In his published work, he appears to rely largely on Ponchaud, quite uncritically.

[400](#). *Cambodia: Year Zero*, p. xvi.

[401](#). The lapse on Ponchaud's part is perhaps far from accidental. Thus in the British translation, the comparable passage in the author's note (p. 16) clearly implies that the "accusing foreigners" are the ones to whom he has already referred: namely, Chomsky and Porter, who "say there have been no massacres" and regard refugees as "not a valid source," an allegation that he knows perfectly well to be false, as we have seen.

Recall again that the British version is not available in the United States, where the merits of his allegations can readily be determined.

[402](#). Much the same is true of Ponchaud's rhetorical question: "How many of those who say they are unreservedly in support of the Khmer revolution would consent to endure one hundredth part of the present sufferings of the Cambodian people" (p. 193), immediately following the familiar accusation that few voices have been "raised in protest against the assassination of a people." He fails to enumerate those who are unreservedly in support of the Khmer revolution, though the list would be small enough so that it could easily have been given at this point. Note also that another question might easily be raised: how many of those who virulently condemn the Khmer revolution would consent to endure one hundredth part of the suffering of the peasants of the traditional society of Cambodia?—a society that was hardly improving their lot in its latter days.

[403](#). In fact, we know of no specialist who takes such an estimate seriously, including Ponchaud in his more sober moments.

[404](#). *Washington Post* (21 September 1978).

[405](#). See note 9. Ponchaud mentions it in the author's note to the American translation without comment, postdating it by a year.

[406](#). *Asia*, March-April 1977.

[407](#). July/August 1977.

[408](#). See notes 237, 259 above.

[409](#). 22 November 1976.

[410](#). 16 April 1976.

[411](#). 20 September 1976.

[412](#). Recall the predictions by U.S. government sources of impending starvation that will take a million lives, or by the Western doctors cited by Hildebrand and Porter (see p. 184, above) in a book which for this reason alone must be kept from public notice.

[413](#). *New York Times* (19 April 1977), our emphasis.

[414](#). 26 April 1977. The implication here, and explicit statement commonly, is that Cambodia did or would refuse any shipments of food. Is that correct? The crew of the *Mayaguez* saw two Chinese freighters unloading rice in the port of Kampong Som in May 1975. See Roy Rowan, *The Four Days of Mayaguez*, Norton, 1975, p. 153.

[415](#). See chapter 5, note 30.

[416](#). Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, Allen and Unwin, 1920, pp. 68, 55.

[417](#). The specific instances cited are not B-52 attacks.

[418](#). *Bombing in Cambodia*, Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Ninety-third Congress, first session, July/August, 1973, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1973, pp. 158-160. See note 370.

[419](#). Cf. Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, 1970, pp. 121ff.

[420](#). *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

[421](#). In the Watergate hearings the alleged “secrecy” of the bombing became an issue but not the bombing itself. Nixon’s crime, we must assume, was not that he sent his bombers to destroy a relatively peaceful country with which the United States had “friendly” relations, but that he kept the matter from Congress. On the hypocrisy of the Watergate proceedings and the press reaction quite generally, see Chomsky, introduction to Blackstock, ed., *Cointelpro*.

[422](#). William Beecher, “Raids in Cambodia by U.S. unprotected,” *New York Times* (9 May 1969). Recall Ponchaud’s comment that Sihanouk’s protest against the bombing of North Vietnamese and Vietcong sanctuaries deceived no one. As we pointed out in note 370, Sihanouk’s protests were primarily against the bombing of Khmer civilians. In regard to the bombing of Vietnamese concentrations near the border, while there is conflicting evidence as to Sihanouk’s attitude, it is not up to the press or others to

decide what it “really was” and then to withhold reference to his explicit appeal just cited on grounds that no one is deceived by it. What is more, recall that the bombings of the “Vietcong and North Vietnamese” sanctuaries were undoubtedly aimed at Vietnamese who had been driven across the border by murderous U.S. military operations in Vietnam, primarily since early 1967. And finally, recall that direct observation by Western reporters and others confirms that the B-52 raids were by no means aimed at the Vietnamese. See for example, Swain, *op. cit.*; p. 284-85, above. While the precise scale of these atrocities could not have been known in 1969, and is not known now in the West, a free press could have surmised and perhaps learned a great deal had it chosen to do so. It is remarkable that Beecher’s unique though quite inadequate account is now held up as evidence that the press maintained its honor throughout this period, despite the crimes of Richard Nixon.

[423](#). See *At War With Asia*, pp. 121-22.

[424](#). Jean-Jacques Cazaux and Claude Juvenal, AP, *Washington Post*, 9 May 1975.

[425](#). See above, pp. 255-56.

[426](#). “Defining the Revolutionary State in Cambodia.”

[427](#). See the accounts surveyed above, as well as the assessment in the *FEER Asia 1979 Yearbook*.

7 Final Comments

- [1](#). On these matters, see Alex Carey, “Reshaping the Truth: Pragmatists and Propagandists in America,” *Meanjin Quarterly* (Australia), vol. 35, no. 4, 1976; Carey and Truda Korber, *Propaganda and Democracy in America*, forthcoming.
- [2](#). In particular, the singular failure of significant segments of the French intelligentsia to come to terms with the true nature of Stalinism and its roots in Leninist ideology and practice.
- [3](#). See David Caute, *The Great Fear*, Simon & Schuster, 1978, pp. 19, 35.

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Noam Chomsky is widely regarded as one of the foremost critics of U.S. foreign policy in the world. He has published numerous groundbreaking books, articles, and essays on global politics, history, and linguistics. Among his recent books are *Masters of Mankind* and *Hopes and Prospects*. This book and its companion volume, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, are part of a collection of twelve new editions from Haymarket Books of Chomsky's classic works.



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